

PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
ON
Various SUBJECTS.

Proper for all Families.

^{Three}
In ~~Two~~ VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

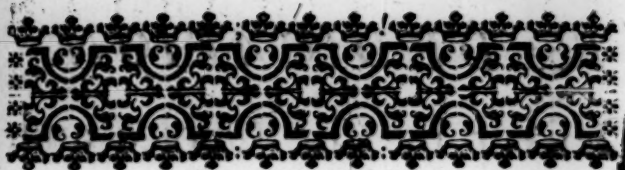
By ROBERT WARREN, D.D.



LONDON,

Printed for the Author ; and Sold by *Edmund Parker*, at the Bible and Crown in *Lombard-street*, near *Stocks-market*. MDCC XXIII.





To the most Noble

JAMES,

Duke of *CHANDOS*.

My LORD,



is Matter of good
Fortune to be de-
scended from No-
bility, and to boast
a long Train of Great Proge-
nitors; but to *merit* such a

The DEDICATION.

Descent by the Choice and
Exercise of vertuous Actions,
is truly Great and Noble.

The Promoting of *Religion*
and *Learning*, and Encoura-
ging the Professors of *Both*,
are YOUR GRACE's peculiar
Character, and worthy of a
British Prince. By these You
have added a Lustre to YOUR
NAME far surpassing the Glo-
ry of YOUR Birth, or That
Accession of Dignity which
YOUR Merit has attain'd of
our most *Gracious* and *Judici-*
ous SOVEREIGN.

The DEDICATION.

It is not for me, My LORD,
to attempt to illustrate YOUR
GRACE'S Vertues. But as in
this Volume of *Discourses* is
set forth in *many* Instances,
the Noblest Character, that
of a *Christian*, so I shall now
content my self with saying,
that in a proper Application,
they fitly belong to YOUR
GRACE, and from YOUR Good-
ness hope for Pardon, in af-
fixing YOUR GREAT NAME
to them, it being the most
prevalent Argument I can use
for their Recommendation to
the World; and do therefore
hum-

The DEDICATION.

humbly beg YOUR GRACE'S
favourable Acceptance of
them, who am,

My LORD,

YOUR GRACE'S

Most Obligated,

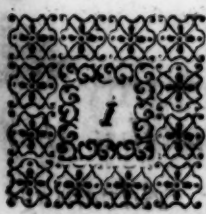
And most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

Robert Warren.



THE PREFACE.

 Cannot send these Discourses into the World, without apprizing my Readers, that the principal View I had in the Publication of them, was to promote Family Piety, and to advance that neglected, and in
Vol. I. a these

The Preface.

these licentious Times, that despised Part of divine Worship, to a higher Pitch, than it seems to be at present.

I would observe, that most of these Sermons are, in a more peculiar Manner, calculated for our religious Exercise, in the more solemn Seasons of the Year, viz Those of Lent, Easter, the Ascension, Whitsunday, Advent, and Christmas.

Nor can I conceive, but that they may be of more singular Advantage to such Persons, who have only the Opportunity of hearing one Sermon on the Lord's Day, or live at some remote

The Preface.

remote Distance from their Parish-Church.

It would be endless to enlarge on the Advantages of Family Piety, or to enumerate the Miseries of those Families, where the Service of God is neglected, especially on the Lord's Day. I shall only mention the Opinion of the pious and judicious Lord Chief Justice Hale, confirmed by his own long and sound Observation, and Experience, and which he gave by Way of Advice to his Children, viz. That he had found, that the rest of the Week was either blessed and prosperous, or unsuccessful and unhappy to his own secular Employments, as he had been diligent, or negli-

The Preface.

negligent in the Observation of the
Duties of the Lord's Day.

I add nothing more, but thankful Acknowledgments for the Favours I have received from my bountiful Subscribers to these Volumes, and I humbly hope the Usefulness of them, and the candid Acceptance they may meet with, may be a Means of publishing another Volume, which will compleat my whole Design, that is, the Glory of God, the Credit of our Holy Religion, and the Salvation of my Christian Brethren's Souls, in the Great Day of the Lord J E S U S.

Robert Warren.

The CONTENTS.

I. Discourse for Ash-Wednesday.

JOEL 2. 12, 13.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me, with all your Heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning.

And rent your Heart, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, Page 1

II. Discourse for the first Sunday in Lent.

St. LUKE 13. latter part of the 5th Verse.

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, p. 44

III. Discourse for the second Sunday in Lent.

1 THESS. 4. 7.

For God hath not called us unto Uncleanness, but unto Holiness, p. 73

IV. Discourse for the third Sunday in Lent.

ROM. 6. former part of the 23d Verse.

For the Wages of Sin is Death, p. 107

V. Discourse for the fourth Sunday in Lent.

St. MATTHEW 11. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest, p. 141

VI. Discourse for the fifth Sunday in Lent.

St. MATTHEW 11. part of the 29th Verse.

— Learn of me, p. 175

VII. Discourse for Palm-Sunday.

ACTS 2. 37.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their Hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do? p. 207

VIII. Discourse for Munday before Easter.

St. MATTHEW 11. 30.

For my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light, p. 237

IX. Discourse for Tuesday before Easter.

PSAL. 116. 12.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits

The CONTENTS.

- fits towards me?* p. 267
- X. Discourse for Wednesday before *Easter*.
 ZECHARIAH 9. former part of *Ver.* 17.
For how great is his Goodness? p. 293
- The Prayer for Wednesday before Easter,* p. 320
- XI. Discourse for Thursday before *Easter*.
 I COR. 10. 21.
Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils: Ye cannot be Partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the Table of Devils, p. 323
- XII. Discourse for *Good-Friday*.
 ROM. 5. latter part of the 8th Verse.
While we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us, p. 351
The Prayer for Good-Friday, p. 380
- XIII. Discourse for *Easter-Even*.
 2 PETER 1. 14.
Knowing that shortly I must put off this my Tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me, p. 383
- XIV. Discourse for *Easter-Day*.
 ROMANS 6. 9.
Knowing that Christ being raised from the Dead, dieth no more; Death hath no more Dominion over Him, p. 413
The Prayer for Easter-Day, p. 433
- XV. Discourse for the first Sunday after *Easter*.
 ROMANS 4. 25.
Who was delivered for our Offences, and was raised again for our Justification, p. 435
The Prayer for the first Sunday after Easter, p. 458
- XVI. Discourse for the *Ascension-Day*.
 St. MARK 16. former part of the 19th Verse.
So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, p. 461
The Prayer for the Ascension-Day, p. 493



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES.

I. *For the First Day of LENT, commonly called Ash-wednesday.*



JOEL ii. 12, 13.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me, with all your Heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning.

And rent your Heart, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.



CONSIDERING the natural Fondness we have for the World, and how easily we excuse our selves from renouncing the Sins and Vanities of it, nothing can be more adviseable, nothing more expedient,

Vol. I.

B

pedient,

Discourse

I.



pedient, than the setting apart some solemn Days for Recollection and Humiliation.

The Church has been all along sensible of the Necessity, and the great Advantages of such a Constitution. And therefore the *Quadragesimal* Fast which took its Name and Rise from the total Abstinence of our Blessed Saviour during His forty Days Abode in the Wilderness, is of very early Antiquity, and was observed with Strictness in the purest Ages, and never laid aside, or abolished but in the worst.

The End of it is admirably and fully expressed by the Prophet *Joel*, in the Text, by these following Steps.

- I. That we turn to the Lord our God.
- II. That we turn to Him with all our Heart.
- III. That we do it with Fasting, and Weeping, and Mourning.
- IV. That in turning to Him, we more regard the inward Renting of our Hearts, than the outward Formality of Renting our Clothes.
- V. and Lastly, The Import of the Introduction, as so many Arguments or Motives, exciting and perswading us to the immediate Practice of the Duty—*Therefore also now saith the Lord*

I. We

for Ash-wednesday.

3

Discourse

I.

I. *We are to turn to the Lord our God:* that is, we must own Him for our Lord and Master, be subject to His Government, and obey His Commands; this is what is meant by turning to Him.

Hitherto we have lived in a State of Rebellion, and even in League with His and our professed Adversaries: At last therefore we are to see our Errors, and quit their treacherous Combination, and act as becomes his Servants; no longer provoking his just Indignation by our repeated Sins, but studying and contriving all we are able to serve and please him in Newness of Life.

As before, whilst we went on in Wickedness, we were alienated and estranged from God, so by turning to him we are to be estranged and alienated from our Sins.

'Tis frequent in Scripture to find our manner and course of Living call'd by the name of Ways; so there are Ways of Righteousness and of Iniquity; To remove from these latter Ways, and go into the former, is to turn to the Lord our God.

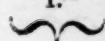
And this proceeds from a through Conviction of our great Danger and Folly, in continuing longer in a State of Impiety.

B 2

This

Discourse

I.



This makes us resolve to seek out for some proper Remedy; which being no where to be met with but in God, we are obliged to apply to him for Relief and Succour.

He has all Power and Goodness, so that to turn to him is an Instance of the greatest Wisdom. He will receive us with the kindest Welcome, as tho' we had never sinned, or not at all offended him. But if we still persist in our Iniquities, he will in the End severely punish us.

But what can be more egregious Folly, than to go on in the Paths of Death, and obstinately to refuse everlasting Life? Would a condemned Criminal disdain the gracious Offers of Pardon and Forgiveness? Would not he readily and chearfully embrace; nay, would not he thankfully and humbly receive them from his Prince's Hands?

Were we invited to Slavery and Hardship, there would be good Cause for Backwardness; But now when we are only invited to the Service of God, which is perfect Freedom, and our highest Interest, 'tis an eminent Proof of Stupidity and Sloth, to delay or neglect to turn unto him.

For if we remember either our helpless and deplorable Estate, or the glorious Perfections

for Ash-wednesday.

5

Discourse

I.

sections and All-sufficiency of God, it will be found that the earnest gracious Call in the Words before us is a most seasonable one, very fit both upon Principles of Duty and common Policy, to be complied with.

Man is a poor destitute Creature, not able of himself to live one single Minute, but continually upheld by the Assistance of God. Whither therefore should he flee, but unto him in whom he lives, and moves, and has his Being? What else can be of any Importance to him, if God forsakes him, what besides can he depend upon?

All the whole Creation is incapable of doing us those good turns which he confers upon us. To be enjoined then to turn to him, is no more than this, for the Poor and Indigent to be brought to Plenty; for the Sick to a skilful Physician, and for the Ignorant to All-knowing Wisdom.

And then as to our Duty, I hope no body doubts, but this likewise will oblige us to turn to God. Be sure, he that formed us has a just Title to our Obedience, and what can we pretend to be the better for a wicked Life?

The Apostle's Question is very reasonable, *What Profit have we in these things?* And if so, why should we decline parting with them? Why are we so prone to disobey the just Commands of our great Ma-

B 3

ster?

Discourse I.
 I.
 ster? Why so unwilling to turn to him, if by turning we shall be made happy, and by refusing to turn we shall be doom'd to Eternal Misery?

Indeed the Pleasure Men take in their Sins and Follies, render it somewhat grievous to turn from them, as they must do when they turn to God. Many will imagine some sort of serious Performances a convincing Evidence of their turning to God, whilst they retain their old beloved Vices.

But 'tis certain, that turning to him is only sincere, and shall be only effectual, which is evidenc'd by our stedfastly renouncing all kinds and degrees of Sin, so as to reject the Temptations offer'd for complying with them. This alone will make us welcome Guests, our Sins pollute and defile us; but washed away by godly Sorrow and unfeigned Resolutions of Amendment, we are fitted for God's Favours, and in condition to relish them.

There's no compounding Matters betwixt God and Mammon. Our turning to God is a fixed immovable Purpose of serving him, without Exception, and without Neglect, which leads me to the

II^d Particular in the Text, viz. That we turn to God *with all our Hearts*. Conversion,

for Ash-wednesday.

7

version, we are to understand, is a Work of the Heart, and affects all the Powers and Faculties of it. Discourse
I.

A Man may have a just Conception of the Odiousness of Sin, and be able to talk very pathetically concerning it, and yet for all this, he may live on in the Practice of it, being a perfect Stranger to the Duty here recommended, of turning to the Lord with all his Heart.

Give me leave then I beseech you to shew from hence,

1. What it is to turn to the Lord with our Heart. And,

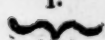
2. With all our Heart.

First then, Turning to the Lord *with our Heart*, is to be sincere and cordial in turning to him, and implies with respect to our former Sins, that we inwardly detest and hate them: That we have not merely some sudden Disgust against them; but are intimately touched with the quickest Sense and most pungent Feeling of them.

And then with respect to God and Religion, it implies, that we sincerely value and highly esteem them, that we are persuaded to expect our Happiness, not from the Enjoyment of our Lusts and Vanities; but from the Fruition of God, from a Sense of his Love, from an Intercourse

Discourse

I.



with him in his holy Ordinances, from the gladſom Light of his Countenance, from the ſweet Illapſes of his bleſſed Spirit into our Souls, and from the Joys and Comforts of a quiet, peaceable and well-informed Mind.

It implies moreover, that upon theſe Accounts we are fully determin'd to forſake our Sins, and to embrace and praſtiſe Virtue, to ſet our ſelves intirely in the future Courſe of our Lives, to walk as becomes the redeem'd Children and faithful Servants of a moſt Holy God.

So turning to the Lord with our Heart is oppoſed to all hypocritical Pretences, and ſhew of turning to him, of which ſort are principally an affected noiſe of many and long Prayers, and Oſtentation of our good and charitable Deeds, and judging of our Condition by the meer Externals of Religion. Theſe are ſad Proofs that our Hearts are not ſincerely engaged in the momentous Affairs of receding from the Paths of Sin, and adhering firmly to the Service of God, and the Duties of Chriſtianity.

This is the diſtinguiſhing Qualification of turning to God with our Hearts; that we perceive ſome real Alteration within us, and that by the Aſſiſtance of God's good Spirit, we are renewed and cleanſed in our Minds.

And

for Ash-wednesday.

9

Discourse

I.

And I think I may safely affirm this important Change never to be wrought at any time by our own Endeavours, tho' never so uninterrupted, never so serious, except the Father of Lights is pleased from above to illuminate, confirm, and strengthen us. 'Tis he alone that can reach the Heart, he alone can turn it; therefore we may well fall upon our Knees, and beg of God as the Prophet does, *Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned.*

Perhaps one main Reason of Mens frequent miscarrying, is their too much depending upon their own Abilities, and totally disregarding, or else slightly asking the Supplies of Divine Grace. From hence it is, that their Contrition and Repentance are no more but formal Deceits, and not thoroughly rooted and established in their Souls.

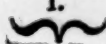
Whereas, would they have frequently and earnestly requested, and chiefly relied on Heaven's Succours, they had been successful, and done to purpose, what now they must be forced to do over again.

Let this Expression then of turning to the Lord with our Heart, wisely admonish us to direct all our Religious Performances to this excellent End, and never content our selves with what comes short of it.

Secondly,

Discourse

I.



Secondly, I am to enquire into the Import of turning to the Lord *with all our Heart*. This seems to denote an universal Obedience at all Times, and in all the Instances of Duty, and so of consequence, a total Renunciation of Sin at all Times, and in all Circumstances and Conditions.

But since the Frailty of our Nature renders it impossible for us to live intirely free from all manner of Sin, therefore we must conclude, that this is not the Test and Standard of turning with all our Heart, or in other words — That those who do sometimes commit Evil, may nevertheless be said, in the Sense of the Prophet, to turn to the Lord with all their Heart.

What then is the meaning of that Phrase, and how is the Universality of it to be explained? In order to clear this, we are to remember always, that 'tis spoken only of the *inward Frame and Disposition of the Mind*, which is to be hugely desirous of pleasing God, and mightily averse from the Transgression of his Laws.

This Desire and Aversion, when very strong and unfeigned, will produce two considerable Effects.

First, With regard to our *After-behaviour*. It will make us strive all we are able, to live in a reverential Awe and Fear

for Ash-wednesday.

I I

Fear of God, and in all Times and Cases whatever to obey his Will. And, Discourse
I.

Secondly, With regard to those Sins, which we could not with all our Care, prevent falling into, let them be of what Kind or Nature they will, this Desire and Aversion inclines us to bewail and lament them, which together, contain the Meaning of turning to the Lord with all our Heart.

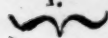
First, Turning to the Lord with all our Heart, signifies, That tho' we cannot give him our *whole* Heart, so as not at all to offend him; we are notwithstanding in Desire and Affection solely his, not wilfully, not premeditatively, much less habitually sinning against him; — That we do not upon any pressing Emergency, think our selves excused from our Duty, or permitted to act contrary to it. But whether in Prosperity or in Adversity, in Youth or in old Age, own our selves always oblig'd, and do always, to the best of our Power, endeavour faithfully to serve him.

The same is true of the Kinds and Degrees both of Vertue and Vice. As we are to transgress at no time, so in no manner neither, as we are at all times to practise Vertue, so we are to practise all kinds of it.

Thus

Discourse

I.



Thus turning with all our Heart, is put in Opposition to our partial Turning, when we obey only in some Instances, and at some Times, but allow our selves to transgress freely in others at all Times, and by Fits (upon Occasion) in all Instances, when we have got the knack of dispensing with Obedience, and absolving our selves.

Would you therefore know how you answer this part of the Command, examine whether you find in your selves a settled Aversion from all Sin, and a great Esteem for all Vertue, whether you do your utmost Endeavour constantly to avoid that, and to practise this. For this, you may depend upon, will be the certain Consequence of turning to the Lord with all your Hearts.

Secondly, Another way of knowing it, is by trying our selves with regard to *past* Sins, whether we do sincerely and affectionately bewail them, which I observed, was also contained in the Expression now before us.

If we are only concern'd for some, and are easy and well enough satisfied with others, this is a manifest Indication, that we did not turn unto the Lord with all our Hearts, and may easily be judged of by the like Rules of Universality, as I just now mentioned.

Thus

for Ash-wednesday.

13

Discourse
I.

Thus much of the first Particular, the Duty it self. I come now in the

Second Place, to consider the Circumstances and Manner of performing it, *with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning*. Each of these I shall speak distinctly to, by explaining the Meaning, and proving the Suitableness and Necessity of them. And,

First, For *Fasting*, which is of two sorts, either *total*, as that of *Moses* and our blessed Saviour, and consists in abstaining from all kind of Food; or *partial*, as that of *Daniel*, and consists in abstaining from such Food as we are best delighted with, and do most desire.

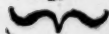
I need not go about to shew that the Prophet does not intend Fasting in the former Sense, the Thing is evident: And as to Fasting in the latter Sense, that certainly is very proper to accompany our Repentance, if we consider it as a Punishment for past Offences, and as a Remedy against future ones.

I have observed that of these two Parts, Turning to the Lord, was made up.

First, We are to consider *Fasting as a Punishment for our past Offences*. We never read of any solemn Humiliation in the holy Scriptures, but what is attended with Sackcloth and Ashes, and other special

Discourse special Signs of Regret and Sorrow.

I.



This seems to have proceeded from the Sense of natural Decency. For after what Manner would Reason perswade the Criminal to approach his incensed Judge, or the wanton Prodigal his offended Father? Would it prompt him to come with an Air of Assurance or Joy, with Timbrels and Dancing, with Mirth and Feasting? I pray would not this be look'd upon as preposterous and unnatural? Should not we all cry out, that the lowest, basest, humblest Posture, and the most dejected, pale, and sorrowful Countenance, would much better suit his forlorn Condition, and be more likely to procure a Pardon?

And why all this solemn Preparation, in order to make Peace with but our Fellow-Creatures, when we are so remiss and backward all the while to be reconciled to our great Creator?

If we stoop so low to helpless Man, what, shall we refuse to submit our selves to the Lord, the most Mighty God? Shall we take greater Pains to be right in their Esteem, than in the Judgment of our supreme and sovereign Judge?

No Sorrow is accounted sincere and hearty, unless it appears to be such by its Effects and Consequences, the most immediate of which, are a contrite Frame

of

for Ash-wednesday.

15

of Mind, and an humble Posture of *Discourse*
Body. *L.*

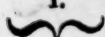
These are inseparable Companions of true godly Sorrow, especially of the more intense Degrees of it : However we can, nay, we commonly do persuade our selves, that we may be sorry enough for our Sins, without suffering the hardship of Fasting or Humiliation for them. We are very solicitous about our own Ease, and contrive all the Ways imaginable to be religious, with as little Trouble as may be.

This Principle has led some so far, as to disregard the most venerable, most essential Parts of Christianity, under the Character of Ceremonious Formalities. Nothing is so harsh to Flesh and Blood, as denying to gratify the Lusts and Concupiscence thereof ; and therefore we are enticed to go the shortest Method, and not put our selves to unnecessary Disquiets, which is the Cause of Mens so frequently neglecting to fast for their Sins, though they would be thought, at the same Time, extremely sorry for them.

But it concerns us to beware of this Deceit, and prepare to resist it ; to restrain our selves sometimes in Eating and Drinking, is a good Testimony of true Contrition. It argues, when performed upon a religious Account, that we hate and abjure

Discourse

I.



abjure our Sins, and resolve to punish our selves, to be revenged of our Bodies, for the Commission of them.

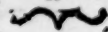
It argues, that we have a thorough Sense of our own infinite Vileness, and our crying Guilt; that we know full well how great and terrible a Majesty we are going before, and how important our Business is. We unworthy wretched Creatures, sinful Dust and Ashes, are going to the God of Heaven, we are going to implore his Favour, to beg and intreat for Mercy.

One that duly remembers this can never think any Prostration too low, any Labours too great to fit him for a kind Reception. He will often fast, and oftener pray, and be sore afraid, and doubtful, that the utmost he can do, will hardly be sufficient to avert the Wrath, and gain the Love of God.

'Tis owing to our Inconsideration of the divine Greatness, that makes us conclude the least Homage and the slightest Performances acceptable in his Sight.

A just and pious Indignation at our wicked Lives, would urge us to punish some way or other, every thing that has been necessary, that has been but remotely necessary to them. And shall our Bodies, whose Pleasures have been the chief

Occa-



Occasion, shall those escape without their Share? O no, the good Men of all Ages have exercised their Severity upon them, and demonstrated their Change, by being in a Manner cruel and unmerciful to them, by denying them those sensual Qualifications they were so excessively fond of, and by the sharpest Discipline and most rigorous Treatment that could well be imposed or suffered.

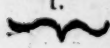
2. Fasting, in the Sense given, is very suitable and necessary, as a *Remedy against Transgressing for the Time to come.*

Methinks we should start and tremble, and our Blood should run cold, when we reflect upon those Sins which have already proved so dear a Purchase. We know how earnest and unfeigned that Contrition must be, that is effectual; to Salvation, the Pangs and Groans of the New-birth, we may perceive, are unutterable.

The Ease and Satisfaction of our Bodies, which are commonly the most powerful Inducements to Sin, will by our frequent Fasting and Self-denial, be turned into Arguments for Religion and Vertue. When tempted to such or such a Vice, we may argue thus with our selves, How wretchedly preposterous would it be in me, now to commit that Sin again,

C

which

Discourse I.  which will cost me so much Trouble and Pains to undo? My poor Body must suffer for this unworthy Compliance, and for a few momentary Gratifications of my sensual Lusts, I shall be rack'd and tortur'd in my Mind and Conscience, and must be oblig'd to undergo a Course of severest Discipline.

Besides, Fasting will be of Advantage to keep the Body under, to render it tame and obedient to the sage Advice and prudent Conduct of a well inform'd Mind.

High Feeding contributes to the pampering and Effeminacy of our Bodies, it puts them out of all Government, and beyond the bounds of Reason. Whereas Abstinence makes them pliant and sober, yielding and submissive. This, I doubt not, but what we all are sensible of, and nothing can give us a truer Notion of the Necessity of Fasting; which we are by all Means to direct to a religious End; not to get Glory and Applause from Men, but to approve our selves upright and sincere in the Sight of God.

Physicians sometimes prescribe Fasting for the sake of Health; and the *Philosophers* recommend it as serviceable to the quickening our Parts and Apprehensions; and lastly, *Politicians* have thought fit to enjoin it for the Preservation of Cattle, and Reasons of State.

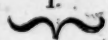
But

for Ash-wednesday:

19

Discourse

I.



But the Word of God, from which we are to take our Measures, has another Aim in Fasting, to cleanse and purify our Souls, and turn us to the living God.

This therefore is to be our Aim; our Fasts are to be religiously design'd, purely for our growth in Grace, and improvement in all Christian Vertues; for the subduing of the Flesh, and bringing it into intire Subjection to the Spirit.

The next Thing represented, as necessary to attend our turning unto the Lord with all our Heart, is *weeping*. Of this the Old and New Testament do both afford many memorable Instances.

Job's Eyes poured out Tears to God, Job 16. 20. and David's gushed out with Water; yea, Rivers of Waters ran down his Eyes, because Men would not keep the Law of God, Psal. 119. 136. St. Peter wept bitterly, when he thought upon his Denial of our blessed Saviour; St. Mat. 26. 75. and St. Paul served the Lord with all humility of Mind, and with many Tears; Acts 20. 19. These good Men, to be certain, knew full well the Odiousness and Deformity of all Sin, how utterly inconsistent it is with the Purity of the Divine Essence, and how terrible a Vengeance it called for.

So *Mary Magdalene*, at her Conversion, *stood behind our Saviour weeping;*

Discourse

I.

and she, it seems, wept so plentifully, that she *began to wash his Feet with Tears*, St. Luke 7. 38. Ah! blessed Soul, how sincerely, how unfeignedly did she turn to the Lord? how irreconcilable an Enmity did she bear to her past Wickedness, and how truly, yea godly sorrowful was she for having committed it?

Thus it will be with us too, provided our Contrition be real and affectionate: Tears proceed either from Anger and Hatred, or from a Principle of Love, and over eager Joy. O what Zeal and vehement Indignation must the penitent pious Soul be possess'd of, when it seriously calls to Mind the Number and Quality of his Crimes? that they have been committed against an Almighty and Gracious God; and that they have been continued in, in Opposition (for a long Time together) to the Dictates of Conscience, and our own repeated Vows and Resolutions to forsake them?

Again, When he considers the Condition he is now brought into by turning to God, this, compared with the Loathsomeness of his former Estate, whilst an Enemy to him, will afford him Matter of the truest and most lasting Peace, and Joy, and Comfort; such an abundant Measure of these, which when he comes

once

for Ash-wednesday.

21

once to relish, will be found infinitely preferable to the noblest Satisfaction that the World can boast of. And so in different Senses, one may weep for Joy, that he is at last escaped out of his sinful polluted State; or for Shame, Remorse and Sorrow, that he has continu'd so long in them.

Discourse
I.

But here I would not be thought to make shedding of Tears a necessary Qualification of all true Repentance; O no, some Constitutions are very hardly to be moved to this; and others again, which are more soft and tender, are easily drawn to it; these might be tempted to Presumption, and those urged violently to Despair, the one by conceiting Tears absolutely necessary, and the other by imagining them sufficient.

We find those good Men, who have most deeply felt the Smart of their Sins, were very often, I don't say always, brought to produce these Effects of their Sorrow for them: Whence we may rationally collect how properly Weeping may be reckon'd not an essential Part, but a decent Companion of inward Remorse and real Conversion.

The being prick'd in Heart, and bleeding in our Souls, is, indeed, the main and principal Business; but abundance of

Discourse

I.

People can't forbear shewing, by outward Signs, the fore Burden that within afflicts and presses them.

Such will weep Floods of Tears in their Closets, betwixt God and themselves, and their Tears and Prayers, intermix'd with Fasting and Alms-deeds, will be had in remembrance in the Sight of God.

Could we all have our Eyes at Command, then it might be judg'd a great Mark of an obdurate, and impenitent Heart, not to shed a few Tears upon the Reflection on our Sins: Tho' even then, it must proceed from the Disposition of the Heart that we are accepted by God, who sees into the inmost Recesses and Corners of it.

As for those whose Tempers are more hard and inflexible: If they are not able, by all their Endeavours, to come up to this Part of the Text, to weep for their Sins, yet they may however, nay, in order to turn with all their Hearts to God, I say, they must perform what follows in the

Third Place. And is express'd in the Text by *Mourning*; that is, they must often recollect the Number and aggravating Circumstances of their several Crimes: And wish most heartily, with the Prophet *Jeremy*, that *their Heads were Waters, and their Eyes Fountains of Tears*; and

for Ash-wednesday.

23

and all this they will esteem too little to bewail their past sinful Lives.

Discourse

I.

For now alas ! they would fain be let into the whole Mystery of Iniquity, and more clearly perceive their own wretched Perverseness, for so long and so fatally persisting in them.

Another Thing that is included in Mourning, is *fervent, hearty Prayer* to the God of Heaven, that he would be graciously pleased to look down with an Eye of tenderest Pity upon a poor wretched Sinner, that he would smite his hard and stony Heart, and make it melt and bleed within him ; that he who once raised a springing Well out of an hard and impenetrable Rock, would soften and mollify his Soul, and bring him to that holy Compunction and godly Sorrow, which might finally avail to his everlasting Happiness.

The mourning Penitent will always have some of the pathetical Expressions of holy Men in his Mind, where they so bitterly complain of their grievous Offences, and their hardness of Heart in sorrowing for them.

The Prophet *Isaiah* cries out, *My Leanness, my Leanness, wo unto me : The treacherous Dealers have dealt treacherously, yea, the treacherous Dealers have dealt very treacherously, Isa. 24. 16.*



In Imitation of this pious Strain, will each returning Prodigal confess his small Perfection and slow Progress in the Paths of Vertue; his Quickness and habitual Practice of Vice. And he will go on with the Prophet to denounce the Wo to himself: *Wo is me!* will he say; Lord I have justly merited eternal Death, I have most justly forfeited eternal Life and Glory. O wretched Creature that I am! I have sinned very heinously, very frequently against my good and gracious God. O that my merciful and Heavenly Father, upon the humble Acknowledgment of my Sins, and setting them ever before me, would wash me thoroughly from my Wickedness, and cleanse me from my Sins. O that he would create in me a clean Heart, and renew a right, and preserve a constant good Spirit within me! Once more, O that God the Father of Mercies, and Lover of Souls, would deliver me from the Punishment that is due to my Sins, and take some pity on me.

Finally, Mourning will include the Penitent's beseeching God in Defect of his own Tears, to accept the strong Crying and Tears, which the Son of God, in the Days of his Flesh, had offered for them.

for Ash-wednesday.

25

Out of a deep Sense, that his own Sighs and Groans (notwithstanding the Sincerity of them) will never be able, effectually to pacify the Wrath of incensed Justice; he'll take due Care to implore the Aid, and beg the Assistance of his tender hearted Saviour: He will humbly importune God, that through the Imputation of the blessed Jesus's Merits, his Transgressions may be blotted out, and his Pardon sealed.

Discourse
I.

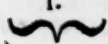
These are the Things whereof this solemn Mourning consists; and what necessity there is of them in the great Work of Conversion, you may easily imagine. But we can never expect to be thus moved and sorrowful, unless we allow our selves a good Measure of Time for Retirement and Thought.

'Tis not a slight superficial View of our Iniquities that will produce this Mourning for them. But we must often, and with great Sedateness, consider the Nature, and impartially weigh the Circumstances of them; and by so doing we may be prevailed with to see the extreme Danger our vitious Lives expose us to; which together with the black and monstrous Ingratitude of them, will be the most effectual Motives to Shame and Confusion of Face.

And

Discourse

I.



And thus I have given you a brief Description,

First, Of turning to the Lord.

Secondly, Of turning to him with all our Heart.

Thirdly, I have explain'd the Meaning of these three Circumstances here set down, with Fasting, Weeping, and Mourning. I proceed,

Fourthly, From these Words, *And rent your Heart, and not your Garment* ; to persuade you as briefly as I can (in the concerning Duty of the Text) *to have a greater regard to the inward renting of our Hearts, than to the outward formality of renting our Garments.*

Renting the Garments, and being clothed with Sackcloth and Ashes, were antiently the most solemn Testimonies of Grief and Sorrow. The Prophet is far from prohibiting these as unlawful, or discouraging them as indecent ; he only cautions Men not to rely upon them, so as to neglect that inward Frame of Spirit they represented.

Men, for the Generality, look more at their Applause and Credit in the World, than at the Acceptance of their Endeavours with God. And therefore, a few Performances done after the Pharisical Way, with Noise and Ostentation,

for Ash-wednesday.

27

tation, in the Streets and publick Meetings, prove oftentimes the utmost that we can be perswaded to, in the Practice of Religion. Discourse
L.

We rent our Garments readily, and clothe our selves in Sable, but as for the renting of the Heart, that being a Business of Time and Difficulty, and not making any fair Shew or specious Appearance, is what few have Resolution and Courage enough to effect.

But alas! Without effecting this, all our other Deeds will be of no validity, nor serve to any purpose, except only to rise up at the last Day against us, and condemn us.

God sees the Integrity of our Hearts, and passeth Sentence accordingly: He is not capable of being imposed on by the Pageantry of Outside, or the Vanity of a precise Look, and pretended Sanctity. All Disguises are naked and clear to him. How wretchedly absurd is it therefore to content our selves with what can never stand us in the least stead?

Had we some ignorant and weak Man to deal with, our Artifices might possibly succeed upon him, whereas the Knowledge of God is Infinite, above the Mists of Error, and Prejudices of Fancy. His Goodness is not that partial Thing, which
is

Discourse

1.

is so apt to lead us Men astray; but as he is infinitely Good, so is he also infinitely Wise, and infinitely Just.

These infinite Perfections are all Harmony; the infinite Goodness of the Almighty, never inclines him to accept what his infinite Justice obliges him to refuse.

'Tis a presumptuous Conceit, that God may be more indulgent and merciful than he has declared he will. And all Disguise and Formality, when separated from the main Substance, being declared very unacceptable and displeasing to him; we may depend upon it, tho' we bowe down our Heads as Bulrushes, and appear dejected and uneasy, if in the mean Time our Hearts and Consciences are not thoroughly touched with the Sense of our Sins, the Shew of Humiliation and Repentance will be of no avail to us.

What a gross Delusion then, and unpardonable Treachery to their own immortal Souls are those Men guilty of, who take up with the Shadow and Pretence, and leave the main Part undone; who trust their Eternal Salvation upon a false Bottom, and build upon such a sandy Foundation, as must in the Conclusion fail them?

Would

Would we all be perswaded in Consequence of what has been said, during this appointed holy Season, to come up to the Expectations and Wishes of our most holy Church, and to the Rules and Examples set down in Scripture. We ought frequently to consider the Ends and Purposes of Fasting and Abstinence.

Those who direct their religious Discipline to the proper Purposes and Amendment of Life, will be far from resting in superficial empty Performances, and will press vigorously forward to the glorious Mark and most encouraging Prize that is set before them.

And that you may do this effectually, do not satisfy your selves, or think that God will be satisfied with the Heart alone, no, not with all the Heart; for with *that* he requires Fasting, and Weeping, and Mourning.

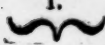
And on the other side, don't perswade your selves, or imagine that God will be perswaded to accept of Fasting and Weeping, and Mourning, *without the Heart*; for in Conjunction with them, he requires *that*, and *all* of it too, to be ingaged in the Work.

We must perform it therefore as God has prescribed it; what he has pleased here to join together, none may presume to put asunder.

Do

Discourse

I.



Do we return to God with the Heart, and with all the Heart? we do well; but still there's more to be done. We must fast, and we must weep, and we must mourn; all these are expressly enjoined by God, and therefore not one must be omitted, where they can be exercis'd.

Some indeed are so naturally hard and unrelenting, that they can't weep upon any Account; others are so weak or sickly, that they cannot fast, at least, they can't do it without injuring themselves in their Bodies, or disordering their Minds in their Devotions, which Abstinence should fix and assist; these therefore are exempted.

But where Incapacity or Infirmities do not excuse, 'tis vain to pretend to any other Apology. We must therefore generally keep close to the Rule in the Text; where I may affirm there is no redundant Form of Speech; no empty Pleonasm, where many Terms are crowded together to make a Shew, or a Noise, or at best, a Figure.

O no, Fasting is not a big Word only, but means a great Thing, a momentous Duty; and Weeping means another; and Mourning another: And as they are all distinctly recommended to us, so they must be devoutly accomplish'd; else I may

for Ash-wednesday.

31

Discourse
I.

may say, how shall we avoid *Presumption*, not to say *Impudence* in one Case, as well as *Hypocrisy*?

For in one Collect for this Day's Service, which is to be said by the People, after the Minister, we pray thus; *Be favourable, O Lord, be favourable to thy People, who turn to thee in Weeping, Fasting, and Praying.*

Now when on our Knees we utter this with our Lips, if we don't actually perform what we openly profess; we tell God a bold and notorious Lie, in our solemn Prayers.

A very unseasonable as well as rude and daring Dissimulation; not that I mean, every one in the Congregation should at the Rehearsal of these words, have store of Tears gush out at their Eyes; but that we may speak them truly as to our selves; 'tis fit for us on such Days as this, to shed pious Tears.

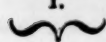
And if we look to our own, or the Nation's Sins, or to the common Dangers to which both have exposed us; we shall soon see that on this Day we have Cause enough to do it.

But from the manner of Returning to God, let us now pass,

Fifthly and Lastly, To the Motives or Arguments exciting and perswading to it.
They

Discourse

I.



They are several, and lie in the beginning of the Text in these Words; *Therefore also now saith the Lord.*

Where they are couch'd so close as not to be obvious and apparent to a slight Notice or superficial Observation. We must consider them well, and look narrowly into them, if we would discover them.

And if we view them seriously, even without curious prying into them, we may discern the Motives, and not only find them, but feel the Force and Energy of them, if we be not too senseless of divine Incitements; they are these three. As,

1st. God's calling us, *Therefore saith the Lord.*

2dly. The Reiteration of his Call. Also,

3dly. The Time of this Reiteration. Now,

To this Return to Himself, God calls us two Ways.

First, By his Word. And,

Secondly, By his Works.

First, By his Word. Which may fitly be term'd as it is, a two-edged Sword. For 'tis set with Promises on one side, and with Threatnings on the other; and so arm'd with a double Sharpness, fit to cut off our Practices of Sin; and to cut out our way to Repentance.

By

for Ash-wednesday.

33

Discourse

I.

By his *Threatnings* he frights us from Sin; by his *Promises* he allures us to Repentance; by both he saith, *Turn ye even to me.*

Much Time might here be spent in reciting Divine Threats and Promises, whereby God in his Inspired Word, calls us off our Sins unto himself. I mention for Brevity sake but one of each.

The Threatning occurs in *Rom. 6. 23. The Wages of Sin is Death.* Of all common things incident to Men, Death is the most dreadful. But then the Death here pointed at must be more terrible than any other, as including all sorts or degrees of Death; a Death that reaches and runs through all Capacities.

For by Death here is not only meant temporal Death, which seizes the Body; nor spiritual Death, to which the Soul is obnoxious upon Earth; but also Death eternal, to which Soul and Body shall be jointly consigned in the black infernal Prisons: Where the Pain of Loss, and the Pain of Sense; the Forfeiture of all things that are good, and the Infliction of Torments endless and intolerable, shall be the Lot of undone Creatures.

And can any Evil be more formidable? How must this Threatning then alarm Sinners, if rightly apprehended, and deter

D

and

Discourse

I.

and drive them from their Impieties? Who would dare to persist in Sin, that seriously think, and firmly believe, that it will sink them into vehement and eternal Tortures, in which they must die for ever and for ever?

The Promise I note, is set down in the 55th Chapter of *Isaiab*, and the 7th Verse, *Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* So that if we have been wicked in our Ways, and unrighteous in our Thoughts; never so wicked in the one, and unrighteous in the other, or in both; God is still so far from rejecting us, that if we return to him by timely Repentance, he will pardon us. And which is more, *He will abundantly pardon us.* In so free a manner that is, and in so full a measure, that his Pardon shall extend to all our Transgressions, be they never so many, various, and provoking.

And O how powerfully must this Promise draw us from our Sins to God, when upon our Return he will finally absolve us from all our Trespasses? Especially if we consider that the Fruit or Product of that Pardon shall be Divine Peace upon Earth, flowing from Reconciliation to the Divine
Ma.

for Ash-wednesday.

35

Majesty? And if we consider further yet, *Discourse*
that this Peace here shall shortly expire in- *I.*
to Rest above, and that that Rest shall be
attended with Glory, Honour and Joy in
a State of blessed Immortality.

But then what an high Aggravation of
our Guilt must it be for us to continue in
any Sins, when a multitude of direful
Threatnings and gracious Promises, like
those cited, are proclaimed from Heaven
to us, and call us off from our Sins in that
Word which came from thence?

And as God calls us by his Word, so he
does it by *his Works*. They are of two
sorts.

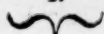
Works of Mercy. And
Justice.

His Works of *Mercy* are either, *Tempo-
ral*, as Health, Peace, Plenty, and Pro-
sperity; or else *Spiritual*, as Graces, Or-
dinances, Gifts, and the many and great
Advantages and Satisfactions that result to
us from them.

His Works of *Justice* are either *particu-
lar*, as Sicknes, Poverty, Slander, Losses,
and the like Evils, which touch us in our
private and personal Capacities. Or else
general, which alight upon an whole
Kingdom, Country, or Nation at once,
as Plague and Pestilence, Death and Fa-
mine, War and Persecution.

D 2

By



By the former of which God does now call us, I mean by that overflowing Scourge, or dreadful Judgment which has so lately raged in the neighbouring Nations. And O how necessary is it that we should hear and obey this shrill Call of his Justice, whilst it does sound so terribly in our Ears?

And truly considering what loud and repeated Alarms this Judgment of God has given us, it may seem very strange that we should move so slowly towards him.

In the *outward* part of Turning to God, or in part of that outward part we have made some Progress, I mean in *Fasting*, which has been publickly injoin'd. But then I fear, we have done little in Weeping and Mourning. At least we are short in the *inward* part of pious Conversion, we have not turned with the Heart, or not with *all* the Heart.

The 2^a Motive is *the Reiteration* of God's Call, *Also*; with *the Time* of this Reiteration, *Now*——*Also Now saith the Lord.*

He did not call the *Jews* once and no more, but over and over, as *also* insinuates. And so he has done by *us*. He has emitted or sent out his Calls again and again, even to numberless Repetitions.

He

for Ash-wednesday.

37

Discourse
I.

He has called us every Day, and Week, and Month, and Year, for many together; often by his Justice, and always by his Mercy. For our Land flows with Milk and Honey, and plenty of all needful Accommodations.

Nor do we abound more with temporal than spiritual Mercies: for we have the pure Christian Religion planted amongst us, and have had that Religion long preserved to us: Preserved frequently and miraculously when it has been oppress'd, and almost extinguish'd just by us, and in Danger of being ruin'd and destroy'd with us, God has protected and maintained it as little as we loved, or valued, or practis'd it.

And now the whole Kingdom, through every Parish has its Church, and every Church hath its Minister. And not only every Minister, but every Man hath, or may have his Bible. O these are all merciful Calls to turn us to God.

And if we wou'd but conscionably attend to them, how effectual would they be? But if they prove not so at last, wo unto us! for what Punishment must await those Souls that disregard and disobey the Calls of God? *Such Calls* of *His*, and so reiterated? especially when that Reiteration is carried on, and continued to this Time, even till *now*.

D 3

As

Discourse

I.

As he has done formerly, so he does at present, and that most emphatically. For the Call now sounding in our Ears, and directed to our Hearts, is a complicated or combined one. A Call made up of many Calls united.

For now God calls us by the awakening Consideration of the dreadful Plague that has swept away so many Thousands of our neighbouring Nations.

And 'tis not a great many Years since, God called us by a stormy Wind, and Tempest, and by a long, tedious, and expensive War.

And now our Sovereign, whom God long preserve, has very lately called us by his pious and pathetic Proclamation. This Day calls us by its strict Solemnity ; and this Text calls us by a powerful Urgency.

All put together call us jointly to return to the Lord, and that with the Heart, with all the Heart, and with Fasting, Weeping, and Mourning. And O let this Call be successful, let it have its due Influence upon us ; else God may justly cut us off, and so we shall hear no more such Calls. Or he may give us up to a senseless Spirit, and then, though we hear many such Calls, we shall never obey them ; and this will be extremely sad and dismal beyond all Expression.

The

for Ash-wednesday:

39

Discourse

I.

The last Motive to our Returning, is the Reason of this reiterated Call, hinted in the Word *Therefore*. And why? Because God had denounced a dreadful Judgment against the *Jews*, at the first Verse of this Chapter, *Blow ye a Trumpet in Zion, and sound an Alarm in my holy Mountain; Let all the Inhabitants of the Land tremble. And why? For the Day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at Hand.*

The Time of God's Judgment was approaching: And the Judgment supervening on the *Jews*, was a great People, and a Strong, v. 2. such as would be fatal to all Things in their Way.

A Fire devoureth before them, and behind them a Flame burneth: The Land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate Wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. Therefore the *Jews* were to return.

And so must we for the same Reason: Our Circumstances are like theirs, only worse. For the same Judgment was not only threaten'd against us, but was lately inflicted on us; indeed we have been actually ingaged in War, with a great and strong People, known to be devouring as Fire, and consuming as a Flame; and God alone knows how soon the Trumpet of War may blow again.

D 4

But

Practical Discourses

But if *this* Judgment does not suddenly overtake us, we have the greatest Cause to dread that sorer Punishment the Plague and Pestilence, which has spread it self into so many Parts of *Europe*, insomuch that but very few Countries have escaped.

Is it not then a most fit Juncture for us all to return to God, in order to avert this impending Judgment from us? According to the *Rules then*, and by Virtue of the *Motives* now delivered: Let us return to the Lord.

We are too inclinable to put the evil Day far from us, and evade, from time to time, by ten thousand little Shifts, what we do not care at all to practise.

But to turn unto the Lord, to turn unto him with our Hearts, with all our Hearts; nay, and to turn *with Fasting, with Weeping, and with Mourning*, is a Duty acknowledged by all.

Whence then, in the Name of God, is it, so few, so very few set seriously to the Performance of it? Why from hence, undoubtedly, that they think it may be soon enough hereafter. By this Means they put it off from Day to Day, with prospect (as they idly pretend) of more Leisure and better Opportunity.

But the Prophet in the Words of the Text advises us now immediately, without

for Ash-wednesday.

41

Discourse

I.

out any farther delay, to turn to the Lord our God. *Behold now is the accepted Time! Behold now is the Day of Salvation. To Day, if you will hear God's Voice, harden not your Hearts.* If we delay any longer, it may be to our Peril and great Disadvantage; because, perhaps, our Lives may be shorten'd, or our good Dispositions lessen'd. But,

Now at the Return of this great Fast, when the Church exhorts us so earnestly to it; when we have the forty Days of our holy Master, in View.

Now a particular Office has been used on this Day by her Appointment, to move us, as she says, to earnest and true Repentance. And O that none here, that none of her Communion might disappoint her in her holy Intention!

Besides the holy Communion draws on, which none but true Penitents can worthily partake of: And to this Use or End, the Christians *Lent* of old did minister. It served as a Time for strict Repentance, and a devout Preparation for the venerable and mysterious Solemnity of the Lord's Supper.

This Care and Pains does our Church take, and thus does she seek and strive to convince us of the Need and Excellency of true Conversion; God grant that her
pious

Discourse

I.

pious Labour may not be in vain! But now in *Lent*, after the laudable Example of our pious Ancestors, let us be employ'd in exercising Acts of Hostility, and becoming Vengeance on our Bodies.

Now let us wean our Affections from the World, and set them on Things above. It is a Shame for any Member of the Church of *England*, not to shine bright, and to set a Pattern of Self-denial, Purity, and Heavenly-mindedness to all about him.

Would we approve our selves the true Sons and Daughters of this best of Churches in the World, by observing religiously her Constitutions and Appointments, we should at the same Time be good; we should be, I may venture to say, the best of Christians.

O then let not this most solemn Season pass by us, without affording some Proofs of our Advancement in Piety.

Let us grow more humble and mortified; more serious and devout; more zealous and heavenly minded; more moderate and charitable to Men, be they of what Perswasion soever, and in all Things either as to Prosperity or Adversity; Health or Sickness; a longer Life or a speedy Death, more resigned to the good Will of God.

Above

for Ash-wednesday.

43

Discourse

I.

Above all, let us labour most unweariedly in those Places, and Stations, God's good Providence has appointed us, and pray most fervently, that we may with all our Hearts, turn to the Lord our God, by observing his Laws in this World; that so at length, when we come to be sick or dye, we may have the joyful Hopes and comfortable Assurance of being for ever with Him, in the World to come.

Amen.

PRACTI-



D

E

Sec

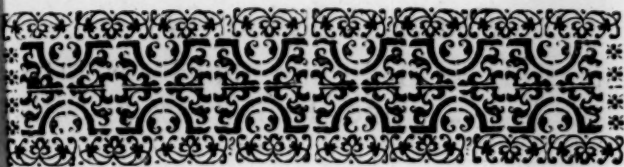


St.

Ex



fed
con
tai



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
OF
REPENTANCE.

*Second Discourse for the First Sunday
in LENT. R*



St. LUKE 13. Latter Part of the
5th Verse.

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.



THE Duty of Repentance Discourse
is at all Times a proper II.
Subject for our most seri-
ous Meditation, but more
especially during *Lent*, and
before receiving of the bles-
sed Sacrament, to which we ought to
come prepared and fitted for the Enter-
tainment of Heaven, the glorious Refresh-
ments

Discourse

II.

ments of the Body and Blood of Christ. At such a Time, Repentance is indispensably necessary, and we must set our selves to a very exact Performance of it. This is the Marriage-Garment, the white and becoming Vesture, that we are to meet the Bridegroom in.

Indeed we cannot meet him spotless, and intirely free from Sin, as so divine a Being, so great and generous a Benefactor ought to be met. However, let us not present our selves before him in all the Filthiness and Pollution we daily wallow in, but let us do our utmost, to come purged and cleansed by true Repentance, from the very bottom of our Souls, abhorring all our past Impurities, and steadfast and resolute against all future Defilements.

'Tis to give all the Assistance I was able to the truly penitent, that I have pitched upon these Words, and to lend them the best Help in preparing themselves for the receiving the Holy Sacrament at *Easter*, with the most devout and heavenly Disposition they possibly can. *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Which Words may be considered two Ways.

Either

of Repentance.

47

Discourse
II.

Either *First*, In the more immediate literal Sense of them, with reference to the particular Occasion, upon which they were delivered : And then they signify (according to *Grotius* and Dr. *Hammond*) That those of the *Jews*, to whom he was then speaking, who would not repent of their Iniquities, should perish in the Ruins of *Jerusalem*, just as some others had been crushed in Pieces by the Fall of the Tower in *Siloe*.

Or *Secondly*, They may be consider'd as a Truth of general Importance to all Mankind, where our Saviour declares unto us, that without sincere Repentance, there's no Remission of Sins, no hope of Mercy : Except we repent we are irrecoverably lost and miserably undone for ever and for ever.

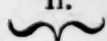
No doubt but both these Interpretations were intended by our blessed Saviour, and both of them might probably be understood by the wisest, at least, of those to whom he addressed himself.

It was the gracious Method of our merciful Lord, to instruct Men in his heavenly Doctrine, by Similitudes and Emblems, to raise their Minds by the most easy familiar Steps, from gross and carnal, to divine and heavenly Things.

And

Discourse

II.



And here was a fair Opportunity for him to explain and urge the Necessity of Repentance, in order to their eternal Happiness. *Pilate* had most barbarously destroy'd some of the *Galileans*, and had offered up their Blood with the solemn Sacrifices. This People looked upon, not only as an Act of monstrous Cruelty in the Governour; but as a certain Mark of God's heavy Displeasure against those wicked Men.

They verily believed that Things of this Nature were under the Disposal of a Just and Righteous God, and that therefore, when he was pleased to inflict such extraordinary Punishments, their Guilt was proportionable, who suffered them.

Hence they passed very severe Censures upon these unhappy Persons, as they did likewise upon some others, who were killed by the Fall of a Tower in *Siloe*.

But our Redeemer informs them, that in both these Cases they were much mistaken; *I tell you*, says he, *no, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*.

Not intending that we shall so perish, and in such a Manner, dye such a kind of temporal Death as those, upon whose account the Words were spoken, either by the Fall of a Tower, or a Wall, but only that we shall as certainly, and inevitably
perish

of Repentance.

49

perish as ever they did; our Destruction without Repentance is as certain as theirs. Discourse II.

From the Words explain'd, we are to consider two Things.

- I. What Repentance is. And,
- II. What are the dismal Consequences of neglecting it.

First, *What Repentance is*: And I take it to include these four Particulars.

1. Self-Examination.
2. Confession of our Sins.
3. Godly Sorrow for them. And,
4. Unfeigned Resolution of Amendment of Life.

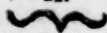
First, He that would repent truly and earnestly of all his Sins, must set himself very seriously to examine what they have been. Repentance of a Crime supposes the Commission of it, and therefore had Man continued in his first unsinning State, there could have been no room for this Duty; but now since in many Things we do all every Day, and almost every Minute offend Almighty God, there is abundant need of our sincere Repentance, and it is of the Lord's wonderful Mercy and Compassion that he will accept it.

E

In-

Discourse

II.



Indeed as Things stand at present, there is nothing of so great Concern to us, as that our Performance of this be so hearty and so sincere, as that God, the Searcher of Hearts, and the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, may allow and approve of; For without repenting of our Sins, we must not look for the Pardon of them.

'Tis vain and frivolous, and in this Case dangerous and hurtful to fix our Eyes so intirely upon the Goodness and Mercy of God, as to forget his Justice, and detract from his Veracity. What he has said, whether by way of Threatning or Promise, will infallibly be in due Time performed.

Repentance, as it is that upon which our everlasting Happiness depends, calls for our utmost Care, and we ought very perfectly to be acquainted with the Nature of it, in order to practise.

The *first* and principal Thing to be regarded is, *Self-Examination*; by which I mean, a careful considering of our past Actions, and a deliberate comparing them with the known Laws of God, so as to discern, wherein we have disobeyed them.

This Part of Repentance respects either our sinful Actions in general, or the particular

of Repentance.

51

particular Circumstances of them; for our ^{Discourse} Inquiry is to be made concerning each of ^{II.} these.

First, We are to make a narrow Search into our Lives, and observe wherein we have done amiss. The guilty Conscience of Man, may be averse from this; but if we dare do nothing but what our Inclination leads us to, we can never become Virtuous or Good.

Since all Sin is in its own Nature damnable, and that Effect of it is no other way to be prevented, but by true Repentance: Methinks this Consideration should prevail against all Difficulties, and oblige us instantly to set about it.

But we are not only in danger, if we wholly neglect this Examination, but also, which is equally pernicious, if we slightly perform it. There are some Persons so wretchedly careless, as never to recollect their past wicked Lives, others so rash and inconsiderate as to reflect but cursorily, and to content themselves with general Accusations. It is as easy as common to say, Lord have Mercy upon me, a most miserable sinful Creature; I have grievously offended against God's most holy Laws; but we are strangely mistaken, if we imagine this shall ever pass for true Repentance; for such Repentance as is

Discourse II. the indispenſible Condition of our Pardon and Happineſs.

We may impoſe upon Men by Forms and Out-fides, becauſe they can ſee no farther, but in order to approve our ſelves to an holy and omni-preſent God, to whom we are ſo nearly concern'd to approve our ſelves, we muſt go beyond theſe; our Examination muſt be managed with the moſt exact Care and Diligence.

It muſt be as particular as poſſible. We muſt take a nice Survey of our former Behaviour; ſearch where, and in what Inſtances we have been guilty. Whether our Offences have been ſuch as were committed immediately againſt God; our Neighbours, or our Selves. Whether we have believed God's Word and obeyed it; Whether we have given him that Honour and Love, Adoration and Praise he requires at our Hands; Whether we have injured our Neighbour in his Poſſeſſions, or his good Name; whether we have been loving and kind, charitable and benevolent. And finally, whether we have ſtrictly obſerved thoſe Rules of Temperance and Sobriety, Abſtinence and Self-denial, which the Goſpel preſcribes.

Theſe, and many more Inquiries of the like Nature, which you may be furniſh'd with,

of Repentance.

53

with, at the end of that excellent Book, *The whole Duty of Man*, are to be made with the greatest Seriousness. Discourse II.

When we are soberly set about this important Work of *Self-Examination*, as we are not to acquiesce in Generals, in bare acknowledging our Sinfulness; so when we come to particular Instances, such as I just now mention'd, they are by no Means to be hastily run over, but to be duly weigh'd and gravely consider'd. At each we are to ask our selves, whether we have ever committed this Sin, or omitted this Duty, and answer directly, as in the Sight of that great God, who shall one Day judge the Secrets of our Hearts, according to Christ's Gospel.

Good Men that have discours'd of this Subject, do advise us to write down the Sins we perceive our selves to be guilty of. Those that cannot do this, to make frequent Use of their Memory for particular Recollection. But however this, we ought not to rest here, for Repentance requires that this Examination be made.

Secondly, *As well of the Circumstances of our Actions, as of the Actions themselves*: For instance, it is not sufficient for a Man to know that he has neglected, saying his Prayers to God, either in his Closet, or with the Family, or at Church,

Discourse

II.

and that he has sinfully turned his back upon the Lord's Table, when the blessed Sacrament was to be administred, or has come unworthily, and without due Preparation to it ; but he must inquire,

First, Whether he has done this often, so often that it is now become habitual and customary. And,

Secondly, Whether against the silent Rebukes of his own Conscience, the repeated Calls and Solicitations of God's Holy Spirit, the fervent Beseechings and Expostulations of his faithful Minister, or his own most solemn Resolutions, Vows and Purposes at any Time made to the contrary. Now these are such moving Considerations, as do sadly increase our Guilt, and may therefore powerfully incline us to greater Degrees of Godly Sorrow, and direct us to the special Application of proper Remedies.

And this is the *first* and chief Part of true Repentance, concerning which, I shall only add further, that every good Man ought thus to examine himself every Night before he goes to rest ; for God only knows whether he may awake again in this Life. And verily, when we consider the various Instances of sudden Deaths which our weekly Bills of Mortality so constantly inform us of, this Advice cannot

of Repentance:

55

Discourse

II.

not be more seasonably recommended.

It is therefore far the safest Way, and what no one prudent Person will ever neglect, to call our selves every Night to a solemn Account for what we have been doing, and what we have left undone the Day past.

'Tis very dangerous, we know, to let our Debts run too high, and a good provident Husband keeps a punctual Account, and takes a constant Care of all his Expences. And one would think, a Man that knows how odious and offensive all Sin is to the Holy God, how certain the Punishment of all unrepented Sin is, should tremble and be afraid to give Sleep to his Eyes, or Slumber to his Eye-lids, until by a particular Repentance through the Mercy of God, in the Blood of Christ, he conceives that his Peace is made, and his Pardon sealed.

But besides the Prudence and Safety of this Method, the Easiness of it is very great. Long Scores make Debtors avoid a Reckoning, and he that can't persuade himself to make even with Heaven for one Day's Offences, will find much less Inclination, perhaps a great Aversion to undergo the vast Trouble of reviewing his whole Life, and sorrowing for the Transgressions of it.

E 4

Secondly,

Practical Discourse

Secondly, The next Part of Repentance is *Confession of our Sins*. Which may be made either to *God*, or in some extraordinary Cases, where the Conscience is much burden'd and oppress'd, to *Men*.

The true Penitent must, with all Humility, confess his Vileness, acknowledge his manifold and great Offences. He must lay himself prostrate at the Throne of Grace, poor and naked, helpless and miserable. He must enumerate with Sorrow, and Shame, his particular Crimes, and the many aggravating Circumstances that attend them. This is the Way to find Relief and Comfort ; to do otherwise, is to stifle our Distemper, till it gets an Head and ruins us.

But if all the Care we take, will not give us ease, as sometimes perhaps it may not, then we are to have recourse, as our Holy Church in her excellent Exhortation judiciously directs, *to some discreet and learned Minister of God's Word ; to him we are to open our Grief, that by the Ministry of God's holy Word, we may receive the Benefit of Priestly Absolution, together with ghostly Counsel and Advice, to the quieting of our Consciences, and avoiding of all Scruple and Doubtfulness.*

And were People inclinable to follow this Advice, the Advantages of it, when
ma-

of Repentance.

57

Discourse
II.

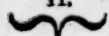
managed with Discretion and Prudence, might be very great. It might silence the restless Accusations of the Devil, and the bitter Reproaches of a wounded Mind, and might prevail with us finally to relinquish our vitious Habits, and naughty Customs.

However, if we do not confess our Faults to the Priests and Ministers of the Lord, as if we can be quiet without it, I see no Occasion we should (our Church having only recommended it in special Cases, but no where declared it necessary to God's Forgiveness of us) yet let us remember 'tis a Part, a main necessary Part of true Repentance, to confess them, and that with a lowly penitent Heart, and in a most humble, serious, and deliberate Manner, to the Most High God. Him we must make acquainted with all our known Sins, and earnestly beseech him for his own infinite Mercies sake, and the all-sufficient Merits of his dear Son our Saviour, to blot out those we never minded, or have, through a long track of Time, forgotten. And this does naturally lead to the

Third Thing required in true Repentance, namely *Contrition*, which is nothing else, but the being soundly convinced, and deeply affected with the Sense of our Baseness

Discourse

II.



ness and Ingratitude, in offending so gracious and good a God, and dishonouring so infinitely kind and merciful a Father.

The very End of examining our selves, and confessing our Sins, is that we may come to lament and bewail them. Till therefore we so examine as at the same time or soon after to be sorry too, our Examination is imperfect, and our Confession will avail but little.

There are two Motives and Inducements to promote this Sorrow.

First, Our having, by repeated Sins, provoked so holy a God, a God so jealous of his Honour, and of such omni-potent Power, that he is able to avenge himself in a most horrible Manner.

O! tremble to hear it, he can in a Moment reduce thee to nothing, take away thy Life, thy Friends, thy Goods; he can deprive thee of all worldly Comforts whatever, and bring thee into a most disconsolate Condition. He commands the whole Heavens, the Earth and the Seas are his; he can destroy thee by Lightning and Tempest; by Plague, Pestilence, and Famine; by Earth-quakes and Inundations, by Battel, Murder, and sudden, I mean unprovided Death; and lastly, his Power and Vengeance reach far beyond this World and the Grave; for he

can

of Repentance.

59

Discourse
II.

can destroy both Soul and Body in Hell-Fire, and make thee for ever miserable.

Be sure, such Considerations as these, if press'd home upon our Minds, must bring us to confess, that it is an evil Thing, and bitter to depart from the living God. Think how ridiculous a part thou hast acted, who only to please thy Fancy for the present, hast brought thy self into the most fatal Dangers of both Soul and Body. Remember that the Scriptures have expressed God's hatred of Sin in the highest Terms; such as shew his infinite Displeasure towards those that commit it: And therefore, let no Suggestions of the Wicked one hinder thee from beholding thy Guilt and thy Danger.

But though our Sorrow does according to the natural Course of Things begin here, yet it ought to proceed further, and be influen'd by a

Second and more acceptable Motive, which is *the Love of God*. This, we are told, is the proper Ground of Contrition. That Sorrow, how great or lasting soever, which is raised and kept up, meerly by the former Motive; that of being liable to Punishment, has in it something more servile and dilingenuous; we are afraid as Slaves are, because of Stripes; and upon this Account it is called *Attrition*, as that

Discourse that which we are now upon, that which
 II. arises from the Love of God, is called
Contrition.

Perhaps these Names may be sometimes confounded, yet the Things they signify are vastly different. A Man that will perform this Part of Repentance, after he has fully view'd and observ'd the Danger, the miserable Condition his Sins have brought him to, must also represent to his Mind the wonderful Love and tender Compassion of God towards him. He cannot but seriously reflect, that God at first gave him Breath and Life, and still gives him Food, and Health, and Friends, and daily Preservation, and all necessary human Supports and Comforts; that it is in him we live, and move, and have our Beings; that he, out of his boundless Pity, sent the dear Son of his Love to save us, and still waits for our Repentance; that he might justly have cut us off for our Sins, as he has done others; and that there is no Reason for his continuing us longer here, and giving us repeated Opportunities of making our Peace with him, but only his wonderful Love and Pity to us. To be short, let us remember, that God is every way most Gracious and Bountiful to us; and sure we can't but be overwhelm'd with Shame and Sorrow, and
 Con-

of Repentance.

61

Confusion of Face, for making such Discourse
ungrateful, such unworthy Returns. II.

Methinks I see the true Penitent upon his Fasting-Days especially, prostrate on the Ground, and hear him thus crying out to Heaven. Blessed God! What Baseness is it in me, that instead of devoutly acknowledging thy manifold great Mercies, and using them to thy Glory, I have displeased and affronted thee, transgressed thy most holy Laws, and provoked thee to Wrath and Indignation against me?

Ah! what unheard of shocking Ingratitude is it in me, wretched Creature that I am, to requite so indulgent and endearing a Father; so gracious and kind a Master, with nothing but Ingratitude and Disobedience, Reproach and Infamy?

Alas! should I thus treat my earthly Parents, or indeed any other Friend to whom I was not near so much indebted or obliged——Nay, should an Hireling thus treat his common Master, how would the World cry out on him? What wretched inhuman Creature would Men reckon him?

What Words then can express my shameful Guilt? What Thoughts can reach it? Righteous Lord, my Sins have out-gone the comparison of all things here on Earth, and they have pierced the very Ears of Heaven.

It

Discourse

II.

It grieves me, O thou divine, sweet, and amiable Goodness ! It truly grieves me at the Heart, dearest Redeemer, that ever I once offended thee. *O that my Head were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears,* that I might weep much, and love much, having exceeding, yea infinitely much to be forgiven.

Thus far of Self-Examination, Confession, and Contrition ; The remaining part of the true Penitent's Task is, *Resolution of actual Amendment of Life.* 'Tis no matter whether this be a Consequence of Repentance, or a Part of it ; sure I am from the Reason of the thing, as well as from Experience, that no one who truly repented of a Sin, was ever known to continue in it.

The true Penitent is not to think his Duty done, till he finds this Effect of it. For if he has made an impartial Examination of his past Life ; if he has humbly and ingenuously confessed his Sins ; if he has deeply bewailed and lamented the Folly and Danger of them, and has sincerely resolved to forsake them, he can never go on in the Practice of them. They appear so deform'd and dismal, so infinitely base and odious, that he cannot think on them but with Detestation and Horrour, and can't consent to live a Day longer in them.

While

of Repentance.

63

Discourse

II.

While we are in this State of Imperfection, we must be perpetually, without Intermiſſion, combating our Sins, and after all the Toil and Fatigue of the War, must not expect a complete Victory. There will always remain some irregular Lust to be subdued, some pestilent Enemy unconquer'd. So that the Amendment which is to be produced by Repentance, is only such an one as is consistent with the Frailty of human Nature, not such as absolutely destroys all Sin, but such as takes away all Delight in Sinning.

Again, as this Amendment at the best is no more than an unfinished Victory, so it arrives at that Perfection, not all at once, and of a sudden, but by various and slow Degrees; it is produced with much Trouble, continued with earnest Care, and does not come to its final Period without vast Pains and Difficulty.

Wherefore I hope it may not be improper humbly to recommend to you the setting apart some solemn Days for the Performance of so important a Duty. Suppose only *half* an Hour in a Day at first, and when you perceive the Benefits of such a stated Practice, an *whole* Hour will not be thought overmuch.

Wednesday is that Day of the Week on which our Blessed Saviour was betray'd, and

Discourse

II.

and *Friday* the Day on which He suffer'd. These the Primitive Christians usually spent, especially the latter, in Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. And in Conformity to so laudable a Pattern our Holy Church has appointed these Days (more particularly in the *Lenten* Season) for the same holy Purposes; and were they employ'd in Acts of Devotion towards God, in Acts of Mortification and Self-denial, and in charitable Offices to our poor, sick, or mistaken Brethren, all Objections against them would soon vanish and disappear.

But the Misfortune is, Men are so generally addicted to indulging their sensual Appetites and Humours, and so ready to quarrel and take Offence at what they don't care to observe and practise, that till the World grows better, we must expect daily Complaints against the best of Constitutions.

However, 'Tis the Duty of all honest good Men to stand firm to their Profession, and not to be put out of countenance, or desert the Cause of God for the Cavilling of profane and ignorant Men. The Wisdom of the Nation of which we are Subjects, and of the best and purest Church in the World, of which we are most happy Members, has ordered this for a Time of Fasting and Repentance.

And

of Repentance.

65

Discourse

II.

And as these Duties are at all times necessary and expedient ; so the performing them at this Juncture in due Obedience to our Superiours, will, I doubt not, but be particularly blessed by that God who is the God of Order, and has commanded us to be subject to the Higher Powers, and to submit to every human Constitution for the Lord's sake.

Let no Pretences then, I earnestly intreat you, hinder you from withdrawing from the World a little on these Days. Suppose we deny our selves a Meal, the Time of Eating may be consecrated to the Good of our Souls by Acts of Penitence and Devotion, and the Money we save by our Abstinence may be given to some poor Family. And now when Prayer and Humiliation, Alms and Oblations are all join'd together, what Blessings may they not procure to us, nay, what Evils may they not avert from our selves, our Families, our Neighbourhood, our Church and Nation?

Hereto may be added, that when once we perceive the Benefits of this regular Conformity to the holy Institutions and Rules of our Establish'd Church, we shall find abundant Reason to admire and extol her Wisdom, and adore and magnify our good and gracious God for our having been admitted into her Communion.

F

Be

Discourse

II.

Be we all perswaded then never to fail of putting the above Rules in Practice. Let nothing but an aged, weak, and sickly Constitution (which may very well supply the Place of Fasting) or some extraordinary unforeseen Accident divert us from it. And however tedious or irksome it may appear at first, or however small our Progress, yet let us rest satisfied that in Time we shall reap the proposed Advantage, the Perfecting our Repentance, which in the End will be eternal Life. *For except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,* says the Text. Which fairly implies that if we do repent we shall *not* perish, but be for ever happy.

I have done with the first Head, and have shewed what Repentance is, and what it is the Text commands under the Penalty of everlasting Misery. It only remains that by Way of serious Application I inform you,

Secondly, Of the fatal Consequences of neglecting it. And they are all contained in that solemn Assertion of our Blessed Saviour in this Place, *Ye shall all likewise perish.* Where we may take Notice,

First, That the Words are absolute.

Secondly, That the Punishment is inexpressibly great.

Which

of Repentance.

67

Which Two put together do plainly afford us this useful Doctrine, That no Pre-^{Discourse II.} tences whatever shall be sufficient without Repentance, to keep us from eternal Mi-
fery.

The Covenant of Grace which was purchased for us at no lower Rate than the precious Blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, is not so intirely made up of Mercies and Blessings, but that there are in it Curses severe and terrible for the profane and negligent.

Our Saviour has been infinitely kind and gracious; he has rescued us from the Wrath of God, put us into an happy Capacity of becoming Sons and Heirs, yet for all this, Ruin and Destruction are not so wholly excluded, that it is impossible for Men to run themselves upon them. There's still an Hell, a Place of everlasting Punishment and Destruction from the Presence of God, for the Wicked; as well as a Place of Bliss and Happiness, Joy and Life Eternal, for the Righteous.

Man's Privilege is, that he can avoid Misery if he please. Without a Redeemer we had no Way possible of escaping Damnation; but now, by Virtue of His Incarnation, Passion, and Death, under the Gospel Covenant we may very easily do it. And nothing can prevent our doing
F 2 it

Discourse
II.

it but Perverseness, and Obstinacy, which will infallibly frustrate the kind Intentions of Heaven towards us.

Here we find Repentance set down as the only Method to secure us from perishing, from being for ever deprived of the Joys of Heaven, and enduring the most exquisite Torments of Hell to all Eternity. And this is the constant Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. *Repent*, says the Prophet Ezekiel, *and turn your selves from all your Transgressions*; *so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin*, Ezek. 18. 30. Which Words instruct us these Two Things.

First, That those who perform the Duty of Repentance as they ought, must evidence the Sincerity of it by amending their Lives, by turning from their Transgressions. And,

Secondly, That Sin unrepented of will prove our Ruin; *so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin*.

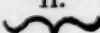
The Goodness of God has provided us a sure Defence against the dreadful Danger of Sin; but if we neglect to make Use of that Defence he has graciously and in much Mercy vouchsafed us, then we must expect the dismal Consequences, namely, eternal Ruin.

So St. Peter, in the 3d Chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the 19th Verse, says,

of Repentance.

69

says, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out* : Im-
plying, that the Guilt and Pollution of our
Sins will remain and condemn us, at the
Last terrible Day, unless by a sincere Re-
pentance, and unfeigned Reformation, it
be blotted out.

Discourse
II.


I am well aware I might add more to
the same Purpose ; but to you who sted-
fastly believe the Word of God, to you who
are so wise as to look for Salvation upon
no other Terms than what the Gospel has
laid before us : To you, I say, these Two
Proofs already cited, may be sufficient.
For they plainly inform us, that Repen-
tance is the only Means by which we can
be saved, and that therefore the Neglect of
it will involve us in everlasting Wo and Mi-
sery : For we shall all perish. And, Good
God ! how serious and most concerning a
Truth is this ? Every particular Person,
you and I, and all others, whoever they
are, high and low, rich and poor, learned
and illiterate, one with another ; be our
Pretences never so plausible and specious,
we shall infallibly, without Repentance, be
everlastingly undone, and for ever misera-
ble. With God there is no Respect of
Persons. But we are all his Creatures, his
Redeemed, and his Servants, and so are all
equally concerned to obey his Will.

Discourse

II.

As we value then our present Peace, and future everlasting Happiness; as we dread the sore Displeasure and fiery Vengeance of a jealous God; as we are afraid to come into that horrible Place where is endless Weeping, Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth; where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched, let us not fail to discharge this important Duty. By no means defer it, because it is a Work of Time, and because if we happen to die before it is done, our Case is desperate, and past Remedy.

But if, on the other Hand, we begin presently, and resolve not to be overborn by the Unwillingness of corrupted Nature; God will be graciously pleased to bless our honest Endeavours, mercifully to overlook our sundry Failings, and unavoidable Imperfections; and to give us the Grace of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to amend our Lives according to his holy Word; and then shall we grow in Grace, and increase in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour as we grow in Years, so that at length when we come to die, and leave this naughty World, we may innocently and easily, with Comfort and Assurance, walk through the Valley and Shadow of Death, and pass into yonder happy Regions of eternal Rest, and Joy, and Bliss,
and

of Repentance:

71

and Glory ; where will be no more Occasion for Repentance, because there will be no Temptation, no Sin, but Purity and Holiness, and the beatifick Vision for evermore.

Discourse

II.

To which most desireable State, may God the Father of Mercies, and Lover of Souls, bring us all, in his own good Time, for Jesus Christ's Sake ; To whom with the Eternal Spirit, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

F 4

PRACTI-

eph: 1 A. p^L of

Hab 12
20



PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

OF

The true End of our Chri-
stian Calling.

Third Discourse for the Second Sunday
in LENT.



I THESS. IV. 7th Verse.

*For God hath not called us unto Un-
cleanness, but unto Holiness.*



AMONG all the various and Discourse
successful Methods propo- III.
sed by good Men for the
Reforming the bad Lives
of Christian Professors, I
take none to have a better
or more universal Influence, than the se-
rious

Discourse **rious Consideration of the great and only**
III. **End of their most Holy Religion.**

For who of us that has been baptized into the mystical Body of Christ, which is his Church, can be so void of Discretion and Reverence, as not to perceive the strict Obligations of Duty and Obedience that proceed from so solemn a Relation?

Is it possible that we should ever be so hardened in Sins, as to be beyond the Force of the Consideration of our being Christians?

One would think it should not be possible, but alas! frequent and sad Experience shews it is; and many in our degenerate Age, and sinful Nation, live such unchristian Lives, as were we to estimate our Religion by its Effects in many of its Professors, we should be much to seek for that Purity and Holiness, the Gospel so indispensibly requires of those who embrace it.

This truly to all good Men is a very unpleasant, melancholy Reflection. It is doubtless extremely difficult, and calls for an exact Judgment, to prescribe Remedies in a Case so desperate, and in a Case too where the afflicted Party is prejudiced against the Physick, and the Design thereof. For Sin does strangely infatuate, and becomes by Repetition so familiar, that it is hard to be removed from us. How-

The true End of our Christian Calling. 75

Discourse
III.

However, through the all-sufficient Grace of God (for of our selves we can do nothing) we may reap *some* Benefit, (and the God of Heaven grant that it may be *great*) from considering the End and main Scope of our being made Members of Christ's glorified Body, and professing the Religion he revealed to Mankind.

There's nothing generally so far prevails upon the Minds of Men, as plainly proving to them the Inconsistency of their Designs with the Means they make Use of to gain them. No Argument so effectual to take off the Covetous from an eager Pursuit of Honour, as to shew that such Pursuits are not to be managed without great Expence.

And were our Minds wholly unprejudiced, nothing could have so great a Sway over them; nothing could more certainly dissuade us from Sin, than the proving that it is a monstrous Contradiction to the Design of the Religion we profess.

The prosecuting and handling of which important Consideration with all imaginable Perspicuity and Plainness, is what I propose to do from these Words of the Apostle, *For we are not called, or God has not called us to Uncleanness, but unto Holiness.*

The

~ The Matter being of such infinite vast Concern, no less than the eternal Welfare of all our Souls, I hope there will be no need of beseeching your most serious Attention.

Now in Order to comprehend the full Import of the Verse read to you, we must consider the Coherence of it with the Context.

The Apostle's whole Design in this his first Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, was to confirm them in the Faith of Christ, which they had lately embraced through his Ministry.

Wherefore having in the Three former Chapters discoursed of some Things that belonged to his particular Management of them, in the Beginning of this *fourth* Chapter, he passionately exhorts them to an Increase of Grace. *Furthermore then we beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.*

And to excite them the more effectually to comply with his earnest Desires, he tells them, that he was not going to deliver to them any new Doctrine, but only to inculcate his former Instructions. *For ye know what Commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus, Ver. 2.*

The true End of our Christian Calling. .77

Discourse

III.

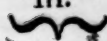
We commanded you before to obey the whole Will of God ; and this Will of God is expressed in Two general Heads of Duty, the one *Verse* the 3d, *For this is the Will of God, even your Sanctification, that ye should abstain from Fornication* : And is further explained in the Two following Verses, the 4th and 5th. — *That every one of you should know how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour ; not in the Lust of Concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.*

The other general Duty which is repeated by the Apostle as the Will of God, is contained in the Verse immediately before my Text. *That no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any Matter*, Ver. 6.

Which Words, though they are thought by *Estius*, and some other Commentators, to belong to the Lust of Concupiscence mentioned Verse the 5th, yet may, I think, very fairly be taken in so large a Sense, as to signify the Will of God to be, That no Man in his Dealings with others should use any Manner of Deceit or Fraud.

Then to inforce the Practice of these Two great Duties, Chastity and Honesty, upon them, he puts them in Mind of the End of their Vocation, in the Words of the Text, *for God hath not called us unto Uncleanness, but unto Holiness.*

So



So that the Words you see, are an earnest Exhortation to the Duties of Christianity, arguing from the Design and End of it. The Force of them, as they stand in this Chapter, with relation to the preceding Verses, may be thus expressed. Since the End of God's miraculously calling you by the Grace of his Holy Spirit, and our Ministry, to the Knowledge of the Gospel of his Son, was only this, That ye should forsake your Sins, and live no longer as the Gentiles who know not God, but as inlighten'd, sanctified Christians. Let this be sufficient Motive to you, for abounding more and more in what you have received of us to be the Will of God.

The Meaning of the Text and its Coherence being thus explained, I come now to discourse as usefully as I can on the Two Parts it apparently is divided into, which are,

- I. An Assertion of what we are not called to, *viz.* Uncleanness. *For God hath not called us to Uncleanness.*
- II. A positive Declaration of what we are called to, *viz.* Holiness. *But unto Holiness.*

Accordingly what I have to say, shall be delivered under these Two Heads.

First

The true End of our Christian Calling. 79

First, From the *former* Part of the Text Discourse
I shall take Occasion to shew negatively, ^{III.}
What is not the Design of the Christian Religion. And,

Secondly, From the *latter* Part of it I shall shew positively what is the Design of it.

But there is one Observation from the Apostle's way of expressing himself here so very material, that I cannot in Justice omit it, which is this. The inspir'd Penman does not say God has not called *you*, but he has not called *us* to Uncleanness. And when a Man speaks to others by the Word *us*, he includes himself; which shews, that no Man's Learning nor Parts, that no Man's Place or Station, no, not that of an Apostle, can give him a Discharge from the Duties of Christianity. But whoever designs for Heaven in earnest, whether high or low, rich or poor, must ascend thither, only by his sincere Obedience to the Commands of God.

If an Apostle by his extraordinary Gifts and Illuminations, is not, for all that, exempted from obeying the Law of God, who then can be exempted? Certainly, let the Assertors of absolute Election say what they will, none can. The lowest Christian is here on a level with the most exalted Brother.

The

The same Lord Jesus Christ, and the same sincere Obedience, which brings an Apostle, or a Preacher of Righteousness to Glory will bring also the poorest and most illiterate among us thither too. Nay, to the everlasting Comfort of inferior Christians be it spoken, that a less degree of Piety will bring them to Heaven, than their greater and more knowing Brethren. For in Proportion to our Opportunities and Knowledge here, shall our Accounts increase hereafter.

We ought then from the Apostle's Expression to take notice of the great and universal Extent of the Proposition, God has not called any Christian, neither learned nor ignorant, neither Preacher nor Hearer to Filthiness and Sin, but unto Purity of Heart, and Holiness of Life. Which brings me to shew under my

First Head, Negatively, what we Christians are not called to: In other Words, What is not the Design of our being made Christians.

There's nothing has had so unhappy an Influence on the Minds of Men, as a fond Belief that the Merits of Jesus Christ belong to them, though they never applied themselves to perform the Conditions required on their Parts.

Come

The true End of our Christian Calling. 81

Discourse
III.

Come to the most abandon'd wicked Wretch, and demand what Hopes of Salvation he has, and he'll soon make this Answer, Christ died for Sinners, and he is one that Christ died for, and he hopes to be saved through his Merits. Just as though the Design of our Saviour's Incarnation and Passion, was to confirm Sinners in their vitious Practices, by assuring them of a Pardon for them, without more ado.

But it behoves us timely to consider, that it was no Intention of our Saviour, to give the least Pretence of Encouragement to our continuance in Sin, but only to reclaim us from it.

And O my God ! what strange Confusion, what inexpressible Wo and Anguish must the Souls of carnally minded Christians be possess'd with, at the great Day of the Lord, when appearing full of Confidence before Christ's Judgment Seat, where we must all expect our final Doom : They shall (to be sure all impenitent Sinners shall) instead of participating of the meritorious Blood of Jesus, hear from his awful Lips, the sad and extreme Malediction ; *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* It was not your calling me Lord, Lord ; but the abandoning your Sins, and obey-
G ing

Discourse ing my Laws, that was what I looked
 III. for at your Hands, and design'd by making you Christians.

O let us therefore, as we value our eternal Interest, examine well our own Souls; the Importance of the Subject, as well as Solemnity of the Season requires it, and see that our Confidence and Reliance on the Blood of Christ be well grounded; lest (which is much to be feared of many presumptuous Offenders) we prove to our eternal Destruction, miserably deceived and imposed upon by the Craft and Subtily of the Devil.

The only proper Way, and therefore the best and only safe one too of doing this, is by carefully considering whether we answer the End of our Vocation, the forsaking of all Sin.

If we do not this, let us not for the Love of God flatter our selves with Peace and Safety. For let our Pretences be what they will, it is most certain that he who continues in any unrepented Sin, is in a very dangerous Condition, and has no justifiable Claim to the Merits of Christ's Death, which are only applicable to the contrite, penitent, and humble Sinner.

And that this may appear the more plainly, and come the nearer to our Consciences, let us seriously consider that he
 who

†

The true End of our Christian Calling. 83

who continues in Sin, directly thwarts the Design of his Redeemer's Religion, inas-
much as he has not called us (indeed he
could not) to Uncleanness.

Discourse
III.

Now the Word *Uncleanness*, in Greek *ακαθαρσία*, may be taken either,

First, For the *Sin of Fornication, Adultery*, and such beastly Acts as with us go by the Name of *Lewdness*, and are contrary to *Conjugal* and *Virgin Chastity*; from whence it also is stretched so far as to comprehend the *Thoughts* that lead that Way. Or,

Secondly, For all manner of Sin. As in the Greek Language, not he only who forbears all unchaste Acts and Thoughts, but likewise he who is free from other Crimes, is called *καθαρός*.

This latter Sense of the Word *Uncleanness*, as it seems most warrantable from the Idiom of the Greek (*καθαρός* with them originally signifying not only he that is not guilty of Uncleanness, but he that is perfectly clean at least from the Guilt of those Sins which were thought by them to leave a particular Stain) so does it also appear most agreeable to the Apostle's Sense.

Nevertheless, a Word or two of our *not being called to Uncleanness*, in the former Interpretation of it, may not be amiss.

First, We Christians are by no means called unto the Practice of Lewdness and Debauchery. Those beastly Crimes, tho' formerly they were admitted into the very Religion of the Heathens, whose most sacred Rites are said to have been Acts of abominable Uncleaness, are now, by a clearer Light, excluded the Conversation of all such as name the Name of Christ. We, who through God's infinite Mercy know him, are not by any means to walk as those Gentiles did, who knew him not.

It were much to be wish'd indeed, that this heavy Sin, which is in its own Nature so foul and base, as one would think it only practicable through the grossest Ignorance, and which in the whole Scripture seems to have the Name of *Gentilism*, as best deserving it, so most peculiarly appropriated to it; —I say, it were much to be wish'd, much for the Honour of the *English* Nation, more for the Good of each guilty Soul, and which ought to be a Christian's chief End, most of all for the Glory of God, that nothing of this kind should be heard of amongst us, but that we should be so clear from its Guilt, as to be able any of us, not having committed it our selves, to cast the first Stone at him that did.

Instead

The true End of our Christian Calling. 85

Instead of this (it ought to be heartily lamented) our daily Experience shews us, our Ears have heard such abominable Instances of Debauchery and Uncleanneſs, as can perhaps hardly be paralleled, I am ſure, can't be out-done by the vileſt Heathens.

Discourſe
III.

For *Socrates* and *Cato*, and the wiſer Part of the then Heathen World, from the bare Light of Nature, abhorr'd theſe Crimes as the greateſt Diſgrace of Humanity; and the meaneſt and more degenerate Part of them ſeem to have retained ſome Senſe of their Indecencies, by the Privacy of committing them.

Can we ſay this of all in our Days? Are not Whoredom and Uncleanneſs made an open Trade by *ſome*, a Jeſt, and a pardonable youthful Trifle by *others*, and are they not practiſed in *ſecret* by yet *many* more?

Were there any of this Number here, whoſe Conſciences accuſe them of any ſuch Filthineſs, I would as earneſtly as humbly beſeech them to conſider for their own Sakes, how irreconcilable a Contradiſtion ſuch Practices are with the Religion they pretend to own, and the ſolemn Ordinances they preſume to frequent.

Nay, I would further intreat them to put theſe ſerious Questions to themſelves,

G 3

What?

Discourse

III.

What? Do I profess the Name of Christ? Has he called me to his holy, his pure and undefiled Religion? Then sure terrible will be my Account at the last Day, for continuing in that abominable Sin which my Saviour purposed by the clearer Light of the Gospel, to remove even from the very *Thoughts* of Men. Holy God, Thou who art of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity, my Heart akes and trembles, to think what a Load of Guilt I have heaped upon my self. O wretched Creature that I am, I have shut my Eyes, and have been willfully blinded in the last and fullest Light. *Have Mercy upon me, O God, after thy great Goodness; according to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies, do away mine Offences. Wash me thoroughly from my Wickedness; and cleanse me from my Sin. Make me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me, Psal. 51. 1, 2, 10.*

Thus much of the Sin of Uncleanness in its narrower and more confined Sense; let us now consider it as it comprehends *all Manner of Sin*, and the Proofs that I shall offer to shew that the Design of Christianity was to forbid us *all Sin*, will hold much stronger against *this* of *Uncleanness*.

Secondly,

The true End of our Christian Calling. 87

Secondly, Therefore, the Design and End of our being called to Christ's Religion, was, *That we should live no longer in any Sort of Sin*, which is the other Sense of the Word *Uncleanness*. Discourse
III.

The Truth of this will be made manifest from these Four Considerations.

First, Christ had never suffered were it not for Sin.

Secondly, The whole Tenor of the Scriptures is to keep us from it.

Thirdly, We are obliged by Principles of Gratitude and Self-Interest to flee from and avoid it.

Fourthly, and *Lastly*, Because the Christian Religion gives us clearer Discoveries of the foul Nature, and most pernicious Effects of it, than any before it did.

First, *Christ had never suffered were it not for Sin*. Our Sins, O that we could hate them as they deserve! were the only real Causes of the Blessed Jesus leaving the Throne of his Father, and perpetual uninterrupted Bliss, to come down on Earth.

Had we never sinned, but continued in that pure Innocency in which God created us, our Saviour had for ever remained in Heaven. He had never humbled himself so infinitely low as to take on him the Form of a Servant, and clothe himself with the vile Estate of Mortality.



But when our Sins had highly exasperated the great and terrible Majesty of Heaven, he came to reconcile, without which we had been for ever lost, his offended Father.

Since then *Sin* and *Uncleanness* were (as to be sure they were) the only Occasions of our Redeemer's Sufferings, Is it not Madness to suppose that his Religion was designed to encourage us in the Practice of them?

See a Criminal released from his miserable Confinement, by the undeserved and unlook'd for Indulgence of his gracious Prince; Can you imagine the Purpose of this to be that he should offend again? And do we not all readily cry out of, and exclaim against him that does so, expecting that the Clemency of his Sovereign should correct and amend the Wretch's Manners; it is common and natural for us so to do. Let us not then as we hope for Salvation in another World (and this sure is our best, our only, all our Hopes) stupidly play the Fool in this. But as we are Christians, let us remember that those Sins which occasioned all the Sufferings and Torments, the Reproaches and Agonies to the Holy Jesus, these can never be fit to be practised by those who profess his Name.

Secondly,

The true End of our Christian Calling. 89

Secondly, Another Consideration to prove that Christians are not called to Sin is, *That the whole Tenor of the Scriptures is to keep us from it.* The Word of God contained in those holy Books is, or ought to be (and Wo to those unhappy Souls to whom it is not) the only Rule and Direction of a Christian's Life. Discourse
III.

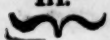
These are what we are to walk and live by ; these are what we are to meditate upon and practise ; and he only can be said to do this, who endeavours to shun those Things which the Scripture forbids, and to practise those it commands, and enjoins.

Now all the Commandments tend to and centre solely in this one Point, the avoiding and forsaking of Sin. Wherever there is any Judgment denounced, or executed, it is purely on the Account of Sin. The former is designed to prevent Sin, as the latter is to punish it. And so likewise where there is any Promise of Mercy and Favour to Men, it is conditionally restrain'd to those who renounce their Sins.

The very Crown of Glory (the supreme and ultimate Happiness of a rational Nature) is promised to those only who have fought with and overcome Sin ; as the never dying Worm, and eternal Vengeance are threatened to those who live in the Practice of it. In

Discourse

III.



In short, look thro' the holy Bible, and you will find Sin and Transgression to be the general and the only Mark at which all is levelled. And can any Christian then (strange that any should) be so forgetful of the Words of his great and merciful Redeemer, as to love and practise that which he every where, and upon all Occasions so expressly forbids? Surely, If we have any manner of Respect for our chief Benefactor, and gracious Lord, we can never perswade our selves that we are called to his holy Religion to practise those Sins which that Religion in all its Parts so absolutely prohibits us from practising. This is a *Second* Reason why we Christians are not called to the Practice of Sin.

Thirdly, Another may be taken from that Saying of our Saviour, St. *John* 8. 34. *Whosoever commits Sin is the Servant of Sin*. Now unless we can imagine (as I think no one can) that by the Christian Religion we are made Servants to the professed Enemies of Christ, it will inevitably follow, that Sin and Uncleaness, Christ's as well as our grand Adversaries, are such Things as we are not called to the Practice of, but such rather 'as we are obliged in Gratitude to our Lord and Master, by whose holy Name we are called, such as we are obliged by Self-Interest,

The true End of our Christian Calling. 91

terest, carefully to flee from and avoid.

Discourse
III.

One would think after Christ has paid so rich and inestimable a Price for us, as his own most precious Blood, there should be no manner of Dispute with us. And O happy that there were not! who should be our Master, or to whom we should serve; Benefits so great and infinite ought certainly to determine our Choice. But alas! Sin, if we practise it, becomes our Master, and according to our Saviour's Observation, we are then its Slaves and Vassals.

Our Saviour thought (as who could think otherwise) that he might engage us to his Service, to live to his Glory; and the inspired Directions he gave us by the holy Penmen, do all of them aim at this, the keeping us firm in our Allegiance to Heaven.

Except therefore we can be so wretchedly stupid (and Stupidity in the highest Degree it is) to fancy, that our Baptism had any other Design in it, than the Consecrating of our selves to God, and declaring us his Servants, we must acknowledge that we are not by Christianity called to Sin.

Christ's Religion makes us what we all ought to wish to be, his Servants. Now there being no Concord, no Agreement betwixt Christ and *Belial*, how can we comply with the Design of our holy Profession,

Discourse
III.

feſſion, which commands us to be obedient to the former, by acting thoſe Sins that proclaim us Subjects of the latter? 'Tis certain we cannot, and as certain therefore that the End of Chriſtianity is not the Practice of any Sin.

Fourthly, The laſt Reason I ſhall mention (though many more might be added) why we ought not to think our ſelves called to Sin and Uncleanneſs is, becauſe the Religion we are called to, *The Chriſtian Religion, gives us clearer Discoveries of the foul Nature, and moſt pernicious Effects of it, than any before it did.*

The *Gentiles* were, in a great Meaſure, ignorant of God, and ſo the Turpitude of their Lives, which followed from that Ignorance, was the more excuſable. But our Apoſtle exhorts Chriſtians, *not to live as the Gentiles who know not God*, Ver. 5. To ſhew that the greater the Light is, the more inexcusable are they who offend againſt it.

God, of his infinite Mercy, was pleaſed to reveal the Nature of Sin very clearly to us, not with a Deſign that we ſhould practice it, but that having ſuch a full Idea of the Horridneſs of it, as might from thence be gathered, we might, as in all Reason we ought, be more wary in avoiding it.

The true End of our Christian Calling. 93

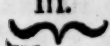
If where much is given, there proportionably more shall be required, as God has assured us it will be, then, no doubt, the bad Christian's Fate will be hugely miserable. For to live wicked Lives under such condescending Methods of divine Grace, is an exceeding Aggravation of all our Sins.

What can any Man imagine was the Design of God's so emphatically, and so often repeating to us the sad and dismal Effects of Sin, but only thereby to discourage us from continuing in it? And when we have clear Notice of Dangers, it is our own Faults if we do not escape them. Plain it is then, that the Design of Christianity is not Sin and Uncleanness, because of the Clearness of the Revelations God has vouchsafed us concerning them.

After having shewn you the Truth of the former Part of my Text, under the first Head, namely, That the Design of Christianity is not that its Professors should live in Uncleanness, or in any Sort of Sin. I come to the

Second Thing I proposed, which was from the latter Part of the Words to shew, That *the End of our being called to Christ's Religion is no other than that we should live by his Laws, pure and without Sin.*

In



In the former Part of this Discourse I hinted that there were Two Senses of the Word *Uncleanness*; and it will be necessary to acquaint you that the same is also applicable to the Word *Holiness*. For it may either be taken generally, so as to exclude *all* Sin; and then the Meaning will be, that the Christian Religion aims at hindring its Profelytes from all Sin, and obliges them to Purity and Holiness.

If it be taken the other Way, the Sense is, that our Religion forbids us *all gross enormous Sins*, as Adultery, Fornication, Lasciviousness, and the like. The former Meaning plainly comprehends and includes the latter. If we are forbid all Sin, how much more all great and scandalous Sin?

There will be no Occasion for me to speak here particularly to each of these Interpretations of the Word *Holiness*; and therefore I shall confine my self to the former; and prove that we are called by our professing Christ's Name and Religion, to live in all manner of Goodness and Virtue.

This methinks should be to all who read their Bibles (as I hope all serious Christians do, and especially on their Days of Retirement) very plain. For it is a Truth often insisted upon, and cannot without the highest

The true End of our Christian Calling. 95

highest Obstinacy be denied, or misinter- Discourte
preted to another Meaning. III.

Our Saviour, who, to be sure, best knew his Business here on Earth, tells the *Jews*, and in them he tells us all, that he *came to call Sinners to Repentance*. And Repentance is then only to be judg'd sincere, when it makes us first detest, and afterwards forsake our Sins.

St. Peter in the 3d Chapter of the *Acts* and the 26th Verse, expresses thus the Design of God's sending his Son, *God sent his Son to bless us*, But how? By allowing us free Liberty to sin on? O no. This, though to some hardened insensible Wretches it may seem a Favour, yet is in Truth, far, exceeding far, from being one. And therefore, to explain how God blessed us in sending his Son, it follows, *In turning every one of us from our Iniquities*.

God merciful, long-suffering, and full of Compassion as he is, had a mighty Desire to shew his tender Love and Kindness to us his sinful Creatures, the Work of his omnipotent Hand; and the only proper Way his Wisdom could pitch upon for doing this, was by endeavouring to reclaim us from our Sins, by the Death of his only begotten Son.

So

Discourse
III.

So in the 3d Chapter of the first Epistle of St. John, and the 5th and 8th Verses, we are told, that *Christ was manifested to take away our Sins, and that he might destroy the Works of Sin.*

Among such a great Number of Texts as are to be found to the same Purpose in Holy Writ, it will be needless to produce any more. If you resolve to make the Scriptures the Rule of your Lives (and thrice happy those of us, who so resolve and practise) if you constantly peruse and study those Holy Books; you can't but discern how wonderfully copious they are on this concerning and important Subject. To these sacred Fountains then of living Water (and may the Blessing of God attend your diligent reading them) I humbly refer you, for the Confirmation of your Faith in this serious Matter.

But besides these express Declarations of God's Word, we may also assure ourselves that the Design of our Religion is the Practice of Virtue from the Reason of the Thing. For,

First, It appearing by the Arguments before alledg'd, that we are not called to Sin and Uncleaness, we must necessarily from thence infer that we are called to Purity and Holiness. These Two, Sin and Piety, are so directly opposite, that one

The true End of our Christian Calling. 97

Discourse
III.

one of them must take Place. If God has *not* called us to the Practice of his Laws, he must have called us to disobey them. Since therefore we have proved that he has *not* done the *former*, it must be allowed that he has the *latter*.

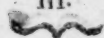
Secondly, The Calling us to Holiness must be the Design of God in making us Christians, because *This is most agreeable to the great and adorable Perfections of his Divine Nature.*

As we believe God to be infinitely wise, just, and good, so we are obliged to think all his Actions such also. Now if God the Father design'd by the Religion of his Son Jesus our Lord, to bring us to live good Lives, this is every Way consistent with his Attributes of Wisdom, Holiness, and Goodness.

First, For *his Wisdom*. Sin is the Transgression of God's Law. How is it then imaginable that we should be called by his Religion to break his Laws? The Breach of a Sovereign's Law proceeds from a Contempt and Slight of his Person, and is to be sure the boldest Affront we can offer him. All the Commands of Governors are so ordered (at least they ought to be) as to keep Majesty sacred, to fence and guard the supreme Authority from the bold and insolent Attempts of rude and ungovernable Subjects.

H

So,



So, though infinitely more, than so, we may conceive the Wisdom of the Divine Proceedings. When God calls us to Holiness he calls us to obey his Will, and submit our selves to his incontrollable Power. By Sin we declare our selves Rebels, and cast off all Submission to his high Authority. Certainly then we must be called by God to Holiness, as nothing but Holiness, which is Obedience to his Commands, can be injoin'd by the Wisdom of Heaven.

Secondly, Nothing can better prove the Scope and Design of the Christian Religion to be Holiness and Vertue, than the considering that *this only is suitable to the unblemished Holiness of the Divine Essence.*

God is infinite beyond the Thought or Conceit of Man in all his Perfections. He is as well and as much pure and holy, as he is merciful and gracious. And as his Mercy has wonderfully exerted it self in creating, redeeming, and preserving Mankind, so likewise his Justice and Holiness are clearly discernible in the Tendency and Perfection of his Laws. And at the last Day, when the wicked, God's Enemies, shall be scattered, and flee before his Face, and turned into Hell, with all those Nations that have forgotten him (all which will inevitably come to pass) then shall all
the

The true End of our Christian Calling. 99

the World acknowledge and say, God is righteous, and hates Iniquity. Discourse
III.

Holiness, as it is completely and infinitely in God, so it makes him abhor all Impurity in the Sons of Men. His Religion enjoins Peace and Love, Faith, Meekness, and Charity, and Holiness the Epitome of all Christian Graces; and it forbids, as displeasing to him, Contention, Anger, Debates and Strife, Covetousness, and Uncleaness.

It was impossible that the pure God, whose Name is *Jehovah*, who so hates Sin as to punish it by the Death of that immaculate Lamb he so dearly loved; it is impossible, I say, that he should give the least Protection to that abominable Thing, or call his People with any other Ends than the avoiding of it, and the practising the contrary amiable Vertues.

Thirdly, In the last Place, as the Wisdom and Holiness, so the *infinite Goodness* and tender Mercies of God prove that we Christians are called unto Holiness.

There is no one Man, however averse he be to acknowledge God's Justice, for Fear of Punishment, but is ready enough to acknowledge his Mercy, in Hopes of Favour. And this very Favour of God which the Sinner so much pretends to, and often upon the most slight Grounds, does demonstratively

shew that God expects us Christians to forsake our Sins, and to pass the Time of our sojourning here in his Fear and Service.

For sure, 'tis no Sign of Love to let us run our selves upon eternal Ruin, and incur afresh his sore Displeasure. The same Sin which had before so kindled his Anger, and incens'd his Vengeance against us, would infallibly, if continu'd in, do the same again. And therefore as God loved us, as he before pitied our Miseries, he could not endure to see us still follow the Ways of Sin, which are always in the End Ways of Bitterness and Death ; but in great Mercy to his redeemed Servants, commands us by his holy Religion, to take another and more happy Course ; to live holily, and in a constant sincere Obedience to his revealed Will.

He knew very well that the Purity of his Essence constrained him always to shew his Indignation against wicked Men. He knew what a miserable Condition they were in who lay liable to the Strokes of his Wrath and Fury. And therefore to keep us from that perilous Danger, he forewarns and threatens, and by the Profession of his Name obliges us to forsake our Sins, that we may avoid the terrible Effects of his Wrath ; and to obey his Laws, that we may enjoy the Sense of his Love, the
Light

The true End of our Christian Calling. 101

Light of his Countenance, the Comfort of his Protection and Blessings here, and the blisful Enjoyment of his glorious Presence hereafter.

Discourse
III.

It is plain then, beyond all Exception plain, that God could not as he loved Man, but call him to the Practice of those Christian Vestues which render him happy, free from his Wrath here, and eternally happy in the World to come.

There are many practical Inferences which naturally offer themselves to your Consideration from what has been said. But they are so easy and obvious as not to need my mentioning them. Thus much however, I crave your Leave and Patience to add, that the Uses of great Importance, and which I humbly beg of you closely to consider, are for Trial of your own Souls, to see whether you have good Grounds to rely firmly on the meritorious Cross and Passion of our dear Redeemer.

For there is no Man on Earth, to be sure, none in our Nation, but what will tell you he trusts in the Mercies of God, and hopes to be saved by the Merits of his crucified Saviour. But to be sure, many will fall short of Heaven, who make now the loudest Pretences to it. Judge there.

Discourse

III.

therefore your selves, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Examine your selves, and that nicely, severely, and impartially, that so you may not be condemned with the Wicked of the World hereafter.

If you continue in Sin, deceive not your own Souls with vain Hopes of Mercy. Though Christ shed his precious Blood for the Pardon of our Sins, yet that Man who obstinately continues in them, shall reap no manner of Benefit thereby. So far from that, that his Guilt and Punishment shall be vastly increased, and sorely aggravated at the Day of Judgment.

Salvation and Eternity are Things of infinite Concern to all of us, and God has very plainly told us in his holy Word upon what Terms we may expect the Joys of Heaven. He always denounces his Woes and Terrors against Sin, and as expressly assures us, that he who continues in it shall die, as if his Son had never suffered.

The Reason is, Though Christ has made Satisfaction for the Sins of all, yet no one of us can be Partaker of his Atonement, unless we renounce our Sins, and perform a new and sincere Obedience.

Let

The true End of our Christian Calling. 103

Let us therefore found our Expectations of future Happiness on the Rule by which we shall infallibly stand or fall at the last Day. Discourse
III.

The Question then will be, Have you mortified your corrupt and vile Affections, and subdued your irregular carnal Appetites? Have you brought your selves up to the Design of my Religion, which was Purity of Heart and Holiness of Life? And if we examine our selves by any other Queries than those that are taken from God's holy Word, we shall deceive our selves into Eternal Flames.

To conclude, Think I pray you, think often, and think seriously too, that as the Design of the Christian Religion is holy Living, so nothing but Holiness of Life can bring us to everlasting Happiness.

The Scriptures expressly tell us, that *No unclean Thing shall enter into the Kingdom of God*; and they do as solemnly warn us to follow Holiness, and that at our extreme Peril, and the worst we can incur, even forfeiting our Share in the beatifick Vision: *Follow Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14.

So that, if we prize the Lord God of Heaven, or the eternal Vision of his All-
glorious

Discourse

III.

therefore your selves, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Examine your selves, and that nicely, severely, and impartially, that so you may not be condemned with the Wicked of the World hereafter.

If you continue in Sin, deceive not your own Souls with vain Hopes of Mercy. Though Christ shed his precious Blood for the Pardon of our Sins, yet that Man who obstinately continues in them, shall reap no manner of Benefit thereby. So far from that, that his Guilt and Punishment shall be vastly increased, and sorely aggravated at the Day of Judgment.

Salvation and Eternity are Things of infinite Concern to all of us, and God has very plainly told us in his holy Word upon what Terms we may expect the Joys of Heaven. He always denounces his Woes and Terrors against Sin, and as expressly assures us, that he who continues in it shall die, as if his Son had never suffered.

The Reason is, Though Christ has made Satisfaction for the Sins of all, yet no one of us can be Partaker of his Attonement, unless we renounce our Sins, and perform a new and sincere Obedience.

Let

The true End of our Christian Calling. 103

Let us therefore found our Expectations of future Happiness on the Rule by which we shall infallibly stand or fall at the last Day. Discourse
III.

The Question then will be, Have you mortified your corrupt and vile Affections, and subdued your irregular carnal Appetites? Have you brought your selves up to the Design of my Religion, which was Purity of Heart and Holiness of Life? And if we examine our selves by any other Queries than those that are taken from God's holy Word, we shall deceive our selves into Eternal Flames.

To conclude, Think I pray you, think often, and think seriously too, that as the Design of the Christian Religion is holy Living, so nothing but Holiness of Life can bring us to everlasting Happiness.

The Scriptures expressly tell us, that *No unclean Thing shall enter into the Kingdom of God*; and they do as solemnly warn us to follow Holiness, and that at our extreme Peril, and the worst we can incur, even forfeiting our Share in the beatifick Vision: *Follow Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord, Heb. 12. 14.*

So that if we prize the Lord God of Heaven, or the eternal Vision of his All-
glorious

glorious Majesty, we must value Holiness so as to pursue it with utmost Care and Seriousness. And let the passionate Sorrow, and true and speedy Repentance for Sin, which our Church so earnestly exhorts us to during this solemn Season, be attended with unfeigned Christian Holiness, in the Residue of our Life.

Be ye holy for I am holy, is thy Command, Levit. 19. 2. and the same, O Lord, is *our* Desire. O help thy Servants to accomplish that, which both thou injoinest, and we heartily long for and breathe after.

We know and believe (because thou hast told us) that *Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14. O never let us live in the Contempt or Neglect of that Holiness upon Earth, which alone can qualify us for the beatifick Vision of thy Face in Glory : But fill us with it, we pray thee, in all our Capacities.

Make us holy in our Souls, and holy in our Bodies, and holy in all our Powers and Faculties. Make us holy in our Thoughts, and holy in our Words, and holy in our Actions, and all our Conversation. Upon all that we *have*, and all that we *are*, and all that we can possibly *be* or *do*, let there be written, *Holiness to the Lord*. That being

The true End of our Christian Calling. 105

ing holy like thee, in this short and mo- Discourse
mentary Life, we may at the End there- III.
of, through thy own infinite Mercies,
and the all-sufficient Merits and gracious
Intercession of the dear Son of thy Love,
be crown'd with everlasting Happiness.
Amen. Lord Jesus, *Amen.*

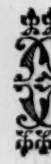
PRACTI-

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th inst. in relation to the matter of the ...
and the ... of the ...
and the ... of the ...
and the ... of the ...
and the ... of the ...

Yours very respectfully,
[Signature]

> . . . n . . .

ATTEST
[Signature]



D

F

R

R

2

8

8

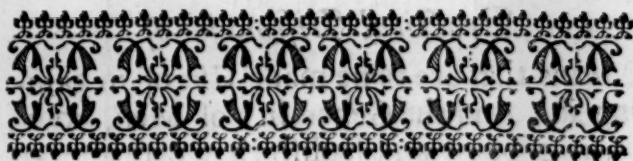
8

8

8

8

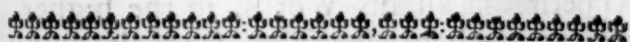
8



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
OF

Death the Wages of Sin.

*Fourth Discourse for the Third Sunday
in LENT.*



ROMANS VI. Former Part of the
23d Verse.

For the Wages of Sin is Death.



It is the peculiar Prerogative of thinking rational Beings to look forwards into the Consequences and Events of Things, and not rush blindly upon Dangers

Discourse
IV.

without providing against them.

We had Reason given to assist us in a right Choice both of our End, and the Means

Discourse

IV.

Means that are to be made Use of in gaining it. And the Generality of Men, however ignorant and foolish they may appear in other respects, are all agreed in this, that Life or Happiness ought to be laid down as our ultimate Aim and chief Design. This is the great *Diana*, to which we all pretend the most solemn Homage; hither would we all be thought to direct our best Endeavours.

To ask the most rude and illiterate Man whether he was in Pursuit of Happiness, might raise his Indignation, and provoke his Anger. The most high God has implanted such a tender Concern, and eager Appetite in all his Works, in the higher Orders of them especially, for their own Welfare, that we cannot possibly but wish for and desire it.

The Difficulty then is about the Methods we are to take for the Accomplishment of our Purposes, since in those Purposes there is no Dispute. Upon this it is strange to consider how different our Sentiments, and how contradictory and repugnant our Practice. Though the End be exactly the same with all Men, yet every Man has some particular By-path wherein to seek it.

One may justly wonder indeed that any should be so perverse as to choose a sinful

ful Course of living, in Prospect of Reward and Happiness. For if the Wages of Sin be Death, how preposterous is it by the Commission of Sin to expect to inherit eternal Life?

As the sick Stomach refuses wholesome Diet, and longs for that which will corrupt the Blood, and impair the Health; or rather as People in the Extremity of Madness, if left to their own Management, will soon contrive their Destruction; even so the Sinner deluded by the gay Appearance, and specious Outside of Vice, is transported beyond Expression, and imagines *that* to be his Peace and Safety which leads directly to Sorrow and Misery.

He is wholly taken up with the present Satisfaction and mean Gratifications that Wickedness affords him, without considering what the Conclusion at last will be, and how dearly he must pay hereafter in the *next* World for the Sins he is guilty of in *this*. The Sinner is void of Discretion and Foresight; void of Reason, whose main Province it is to teach us the Connexion, and unfold the Nature of Things.

Would we constantly reflect on the important Doctrine of the Text, that *The Wages of Sin is Death*, this would secure us against all Assaults of the Enemy; this would,

Discourse

IV.

would, if kept much in View, be our best Guard under Temptations, and the noblest Support of our Vertue. But whilst we forget the miserable Condition our Sins will most assuredly bring us to, we lie exposed to the soft Insinuations of Vice, and have nothing to shelter our selves from the vigorous Efforts of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil to ruin us.

It nearly concerns all good Christians therefore, to have a right Notion and a firm Belief that *the Wages of Sin* (which from the Words before us I am obliged to prove) is *Death*.

By *Death* we are not here to understand the Separation of our Souls and Bodies by a lingering Disease, or sudden Accident, because in this Sense it is really no great Punishment. However, let the sensual Man who values his Pleasures so extravagantly, remember that the sinful Lusts he so much indulges, tend extremely to the weakning of his Constitution, and the shortning of his Days ; and prove very often literally the Cause of Death. How many are they that die Martyrs as they lived Slaves to their Sins and Follies ? How many does Luxury and Intemperance bring to most unfortunate, most untimely Ends ? But alas ! this Death which will certainly be the Result of Sinning, is of another and

more

Death the Wages of Sin.

III

more terrible Nature, than that temporal Death which attends some Kinds of Wickedness. In Order to clear up this I am to enquire,

Discourse
IV.

I. What is the Nature of those Sins that are here intended.

II. What is meant by the Death they shall be punished with.

III. How Death comes to be stiled the Wages of those Sins.

IV. And Lastly, What Influence and Effects this important Doctrine ought to have upon us.

First, I am to inquire What is the Nature of those Sins that are here intended.

For to affirm every the least Offence sufficient to involve us in so severe a Condemnation, has seem'd to some unworthy the Love and Tenderness of Heaven, which they conceive will rather overlook petty Faults, than thus heavily punish them. Hence they have taken Occasion, and Lord! how readily do Men take Occasion to frame Excuses? They have taken Occasion, I say, from hence, to invent a Distinction of Sins into *mortal* and *venial*; reckoning the more atrocious crying ones as Blasphemy, and Murder (provided it be not that of reputed Hereticks) amongst the

Discourse
IV.

the *former*, and Sins of daily Infirmary amongst the *latter*. This unhappy Distinction has introduced into the *Popish* Religion a Sort of Merchandice and Trafficking in Vice. You may commit what Crimes you please almost, if you are wealthy enough to go to the Purchase of them. No Sin amongst the crafty Guides of that Church is so mortal, but a Sum of Money, or a rich Present, with a Penance in Proportion to your Offering, will cancel the Guilt, and procure your Pardon.

All Sins are venial, unless the *Meanness* of the Sinner's Circumstances be added to his other Faults. Poverty renders the smallest Transgression mortal, whilst the rich and honourable have Liberty to commit the worst of Villanies, and lead the most unchristian Lives. But God forbid that we should thus betray the Cause of Vertue. If we should, we might be justly charged with the inodiating Characters of Priestcraft and Intrigue, which have been of late very maliciously, very industriously cast upon us.

Do the Clergy of the Church of *England* perswade their People to an implicate Faith, or a blind Obedience? Do they endeavour to keep them in Ignorance; or do they invent Means of getting Money,

ney by pretending unconditionally to absolve Sinners ? If they do none of these Things, and every Body sees none of these Things done or aim'd at, then I think we may fairly presume the bold Oratory of our atheistical Assertors, to be levelled at the Extirpation of all Religion ; especially the Christian Religion, to which Looseness and Prejudice are the most implacable Adversaries.

We declare upon all Occasions, that the lightest Sins in the Esteem of Men, are notwithstanding mortal in the Sight of God, as they are Deviations from the Rule of Righteousness and Equity ; as they are either in themselves immediately voluntary, or the Effect of what was so.

It is absurd to conceive that Man, who was created in a State of Subjection and Obedience, who had Power sufficient back'd with the most endearing Motives, to persevere without Intermission in his Allegiance to the great Creator ; it is wretchedly absurd, I say, to conceive that in these Circumstances he should sin and not be liable to Punishment.

To sin *venially* is not to sin at all ; it is a meer Contradiction, because Sin is nothing else, nothing less than the Transgression of the Law, and therefore as such
I incurs

Discourse
IV.

incurs the Penalty of it. And this Penalty is Death, a Curse. So in the 5th Chapter of this Epistle and 12th Verse, *Death* is said to have *passed upon all Men*, and the Reason follows, *for that all had sinned*. Sin is the Cause of Death; wherever Death is, Sin preceded; as wherever Sin precedes, Death in the natural Course of Things infallibly follows.

If the Words of the Text are considered, without Relation to the Gospel Covenant in Jesus Christ, as setting forth the Consequence of Sin, and the Fate of Sinners by themselves; then by Sin will be meant all manner and Degrees of it, none of which are venial, but all expose us to Death; from which of our selves we can obtain no Release.

The Transgressors of the Law of God do far more justly merit Death than the greatest Offenders against the Laws of Man. The Dignity of the Person, and our Obligations both of Right and Gratitude to him, are prodigious Aggravations of the Sins we commit against the Precepts and Commands of our supreme Sovereign. For who can express the infinite Disproportion there is betwixt *us* and *him*? Are not we his Creatures, the Work of his Hands, and has he not a full Right and unlimited Propriety in us? Has he not
more-

Death the Wages of Sin.

115

Discourse
IV.

moreover been infinitely kind and gracious, beyond what it is possible for the mildest Prince to be to any of his best beloved Subjects? Wherefore are not our Offences, yea the *least* of them highly provoking and greatly criminal? Undoubtedly so they are, they render us liable to Death, which is denounced in many other Places, as well as this, to be the just Recompence and appointed Wages of Sin.

But our Apostle, in the Verses before the Text, makes mention of *destroying the Body of Sin, that henceforth we should not serve it*. At the 6th and 11th Verses he says, they ought to *reckon themselves as dead unto Sin*. And at the 17th and 18th Verses, he ascribes their being freed from Sin, and becoming the Servants of Righteousness, to this, that they had *obeyed from the Heart that Form of Doctrine, whereby is meant the Christian Religion, which was delivered to them*. The Fruits of doing all these Things are quite contrary to Death, eternal Life; whence we may collect, though every Sin be in its own Nature deadly, yet the Gospel has found out a Way to extract the Poison, and heal the Malady.

Though every Sin deserves Death, and so every one who commits it be liable to Death; yet through the Merits and Satisfaction

Discourse

IV.

tisfaction of our dear Redeemer, our Sins shall be remitted, and we instead of Misery and Death, shall enjoy everlasting Life and Happiness.

But this blessed Alteration does not at all affect the Nature of Sin, which still is in it self as abominable and pernicious as ever ; nor does it prevent the terrible Execution of Death upon lost Sinners. Some will persist in their old wicked Habits, and will not hearken to the Offers of divine Mercy. These shall reap the Wages of Sin, in their own inevitable Ruin; they shall be thrust out into that dismal Place, where is nothing but *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth.*

As therefore I have proved *all* Sin to be intended here, if we regard Men in their *natural* State, so with regard to the Covenant of Mercy and Grace, I observe that all Sins, however mortal in themselves, shall be pardoned and intirely blotted out, if we comply sincerely with the Terms proposed in the new Testament, for the Forgiveness of them.

A Difference must be made between the real intrinsick Demerit, and the actual Punishment. Even under the Gospel, every Sin is punishable with Death ; but then that Death shall not actually be inflicted on the believing penitent Sinner, by Reason

Death the Wages of Sin.

117

son of an Atonement offered by his Saviour for him. Discourse IV.

How can we expect the Wages of Sin to be Death to us Christians, but by acknowledging first that Death is now our Desert, and then that as many as reject the Benefits of Salvation, by continuing unreclaim'd in their Sins, shall certainly in the Event be for ever tortured with it?

The Wages of every Sin is Death, and this Death would infallibly overtake us all, had not God of his great Compassion and infinite Wisdom provided a Remedy for us, by sending his only begotten Son to suffer Death in our stead, that *so as Sin hath reigned unto Death, even so might Grace reign through Righteousness, unto eternal Life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. 5. 21.*

All Sin is here meant as damnable in itself; all unrepented Sin as the sure Cause of Death and Damnation to us. That some Sinners shall not actually suffer Death, this does not invalidate the Truth of the Apostle's Assertion, that Death is the Wages of Sin. For it remains nevertheless the just Recompence of our Misdeeds, but the Sting and Venom is taken out, with respect to particular Persons, as an equivalent Satisfaction is given to God by the Sufferings and Death of his most dearly beloved Son.

I 3

Secondly,

Secondly, The next Inquiry is, *What is meant by that Death which all Sin in its own proper Nature, and all unrepented Sin under the Covenant of Grace do expose us to.* The Way to be inform'd of this will be to search into the Sense of the Word, as used in Scripture.

Our common Idea of *Death* carries in it something troublesome and unpleasant; from hence, in all Probability, the holy Penmen put it to signify not only the Separation of our Souls and Bodies, but whatever was in any measure grievous to either of them.

Thus we may observe it sometimes denotes Calamities that afflict our *Body*. *Pharaoh* in the 10th Chapter of *Exodus*, and the 17th Verse, beseeches *Moses* to intreat the Lord his God, that he would *take away from him this Death only*; alluding to the Locusts that had overspread the Country, and eat up every Herb which the Hail had left growing in it.

So *St. Paul*, 2 *Cor.* 11. 23. says, he was *in Deaths oft*. The Stripes, and Labours, and Imprisonment, with that long Catalogue of Troubles he endured, as they were Harbingers of Death in the usual Import of it, besides their present Pain tending evidently to his temporal Destruction, they are upon that Account stiled so many distinct Deaths.

Death

Death the Wages of Sin.

119

Discourse
IV.

Death then signifies the Sorrows and Afflictions of this Life ; it takes in that Remorse and inward Confusion of Soul, which is the inseparable necessary Effect of Sin ; these may be judged Part of the Wages due to it. But ah ! how small, how inconsiderable Part of that Wages do sinful Men receive in this Life ? We read in Scripture of *the second Death*, the cruel Death of our Souls ; and this Death is not their Annihilation, but their everlasting Misery.

Would we know what is contained in this Expression, when applied to shew the Folly, and foretel the End of Sin, we must form in our Minds a complicated Apprehension of all Ill, of all the Disquietude and Uneasiness of human Life here, and of all the insupportable Agonies, and unintermittent Grievs, that it shall be punished with hereafter ?

Had it not been for Sin, Man was to have lived prosperous and happy, his Life was to have lasted long, free from Cares, and unmixed with Sorrow. Sin first made Man acquainted with Trouble, and it is our Sins that still increase the Number, and heighten the Malignity of all Afflictions. Were our Souls guarded with Innocence and Integrity, the Smart of outward Evils would be able to make but slender Impression upon us. It is the Consciousness

of our manifold Sins, and the Dread of Almighty Vengeance, that arms the Disasters of the World with such killing Force, and makes the Load of temporal Visitations too heavy frequently for us to bear.

When Things go amiss, 'tis then we begin to discern our grand Mistake, in chusing the Ways of Sin; then we have lively Notions of the Terrors and fatal Issue of our Wickedness; and what is it but only this Evil that wounds our Spirit with Concern and Anguish?

To those who are truly the Children of God, and regenerated by his holy Spirit, these light Afflictions (for light they esteem the worst that befalls them) are not only received with Ease and Patience, but welcomed with Joy and Thanksgiving, as so many sure Pledges of their heavenly Father's gracious Favour, and so many undoubted Assurances of his good Will, and kind Protection.

They have made their Peace with God, through the Merits of Jesus Christ, and therefore they are out of all Fear; their former Sins, though numerous and repeated, are healed by sincere Repentance, and the Cry of them is effectually silenced by the purifying Blood of that immaculate Lamb, which speaketh better Things for them than the Blood of righteous *Abel*.

The

Death the Wages of Sin.

121

Discourse

IV.

The Wicked, when Sickness or evil Accidents befall them, have just Cause of Sorrow and Heaviness, inasmuch as they imagine the Summons sent to call them to that final and impartial Reckoning, in which the Devil and their own guilty Minds will prove Accusers. Or, perhaps, in Case of extraordinary Misfortunes, they may fear lest their Mammon of Unrighteousness should at last forsake them. This to Persons who have idolized their earthly Treasure, must be of it self a very melancholy Reflection; but seconded by the incessant Clamours of an enraged Conscience, it must be burdensome beyond Expression.

O the extreme Agonies of a guilty Mind! O the unavoidable Lashings and Girdings of a polluted Breast! how sad, how severe, and insupportable are they? They are indeed worse, yea infinitely worse, than a temporal Death, and the gloomy Presignification of that Death which is eternal.

Thus we see that the Wages of Sin is Death, as by Death may be meant the Troubles and Calamities, particularly the inward Troubles and Sorrows that are felt on Earth. Sin is the Cause and Original of them all, and they always follow from the Commission of Sin, unless unfeigned Repentance calms the Storm, and pacifies the Rage.

But

Discourse

IV.

But now let us take a transient View of Death, in the *other* Sense, as signifying *Death eternal*, which likewise is the *Wages of Sin*. This eternal Death is the Confinement of our Souls and Bodies, after the general Judgment, to the most exquisite Torments, and the most intense Degrees of them; without admitting of the least Interval of Ease, or the smallest Mixture of Comfort. And what adds to them is, that they are to be eternal, and will never end. The Worm will never cease gnawing, and the Fire will burn for ever and ever.

It is a vain and impertinent Dispute, whether these and the like Words we meet with in holy Writ, are to be interpreted of material Beings; or whether they figuratively represent the extreme Pain and Torture that are to be inflicted on condemn'd Sinners. This Dispute, I say, is vain, because in the general it is clear, that God designs to punish wicked Men after a very fearful Manner; and if so, we need not question but he will find proper Ways of doing it.

It is of small Importance to those unhappy Wretches who are to be the Objects of his vindictive Justice, to know beforehand the precise Method of proceeding in the Execution. This second Death will certainly be very grievous; but as to the

par-

Death the Wages of Sin.

123

particular Instruments, and *immediate Causes*, we are not much concern'd to know what they will be; since the Power of God is uncontrollable, and his Wisdom infinite, his Judgments unsearchable, and his Ways and Operations past finding out.

Discourse
IV.

Nothing is more evidently, nothing more solemnly affirmed in holy Scripture, than that the Worm never dies, and the Fire is inextinguishable; by which the eternal Duration of Hell-Torments is sufficiently expressed. After as many Thousands, as many Millions of Years as there are Sands on the Sea-shore, or Atoms in the Earth, the Torments of that disconsolate Place will be no nearer their Period and Conclusion, than they were the very Minute they first began. This is that second Death, which is to be the Portion of ungodly Men, nay, this would have been the forlorn Portion of all Men, because all had sinned, and so deserved the Wages of Sin; had not our merciful Saviour graciously condescended to become an expiatory Sacrifice, and a complete Ransom for those that sincerely obey him.

And those who refuse this only Remedy by not obeying him, are still under Condemnation, and liable to the Curse, and to eternal Death. Of which we are expressly

pressly assured in the first Chapter of the 2d Epistle to the *Thessalonians* and 9th Verse, *Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.*

The Persons who are to be thus everlastingly punished, are described in the foregoing Verses, to be such as *know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire*; his Design is to take Vengeance on all rebellious wicked Christians, who would not be guided and governed by him.

It is not said that he will thus punish all who had been at any Time guilty of the lesser Offences, for if he should be so extreme to mark every idle Word we have spoken, or every vain Thought we have conceived, or every irregular Action we have done, who then could abide it, and what then must become of us all? O no. But they that shall be everlastingly punished, are those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Christ; that is, the atheistical, the unbelieving, and impenitent Part of Mankind. For these sin habitually, and relent not, they make no suitable Application for divine Mercy. They never make Use of the proper Means

Death the Wages of Sin.

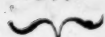
125

Discourse
IV.

Means to preserve them from the extreme Malediction, which are true Repentance, and Faith unfeigned. But instead of doing this, they go on like a stiff-necked perverse Generation, and will not comply with the Terms, those gracious, easy, merciful Terms, that our Saviour by his meritorious Cross and Passion has procured for them.

Upon the whole Matter, this may be observed to be our Condition with regard to Death Eternal. Every Sin does in its own Nature deserve Everlasting Punishment, and had we met with no Assistance from above, had not our loving Saviour interposed in our behalf, we must all of us, as all had sinned, have underwent that bitter Punishment.

But now his coming into the World and dying for us, has altered the Thing, not by peremptorily exempting us from the Punishment, but by putting it in our Power if we our selves please, to avoid it. So that whereas before all Sins would have received their just Recompence and full Wages, by virtue of his great Atonement, no Sin shall be able to cast us into Eternal Torments, but that which is long continued in, and finally unrepented of. And such Sins as these have an Hell in reserve for them. Eternal Death and fiery Vengeance
awaits

Discourse
IV.

awaits them, and sure I am, whatever Exception may be made to the Equity of this Eternal Death, when inflicted on others, it admits of an easy Justification when inflicted on wicked Christians, as the Warnings given, and the Discoveries made, are very home and plain throughout the New Testament.

Then besides, as we may incur, (but remember it is intirely to be charged upon our Obstinacy and Perverseness if we do) I say, as we may incur Eternal Death, so have we many fair Opportunities, and thousands of excellent Admonitions to strive after, and finally to obtain Eternal Life.

I am in hopes that by this Time you are fully satisfied of the two first Enquiries, both of what Sins it is true that the Wages of them is Death, and what that Death is which is the Wages of those Sins. It is *First*, the Disquiet, the Horrors and Troubles of this Life, these I proved are chiefly to be imputed to our Sins. And, *Secondly*, the easeless Miseries and never ending Torments of the next. This, I observed, was the real Desert and due Pay of all Sins, and will still be inflicted on all reprobate and incorrigible Offenders.

But methinks there seems to be some special Propriety in stiling Death *the Wages of Sin*, and this I shall now enquire into in the

Third

Third Place, Now the *first* Thing considerable in Wages is, that *they are to be claimed as a Right, and that Right arises generally from a Contract and antecedent Agreement.* But the claiming a Thing as our Right agrees only to matters of Use and Advantage to us. So that any Thing which may do us Harm or Prejudice, does not fall under our Notion of Wages.

Discourse
IV.

We must by all Means take heed of straining the Comparison too high, and therefore I think this part, tho' not exactly the same, bears however sufficient Resemblance. As Wages arise from a Precontract, so here we have a Covenant made, consisting of Promises of Obedience on *our* sides, and Promises of Assistance and Recompence on *God's*.

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil, try all their Arts, their inveigling deceitful Arts, to draw us from this beneficial Engagement, after we have solemnly at first by Baptism entered into it, and then by Confirmation personally ratify'd, and it may be often confirmed and renewed it by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Indeed the constantly Good and Virtuous, such as need not the greater Repentance, are Proof against their three Enemies importunate Solicitations; they stand firm to their Vows and Promises, which

Discourse

IV.

which the Wicked very frequently recede from, out of an overweening Conceit that the Pleasures of Sin are more eligible than the distant Joys of Vertue. This is their Contract and Agreement, they bargain for the Gratification of their sensual Lusts, to run the risque of all the Dangers that may attend them.

Eternal Death then is the sad Effect of their voluntary Choice, the direct Wages which the continual Service they have paid to their Master calls for, and Infinite Justice is concerned to see these Wages punctually fulfilled. Or if God was not concerned, yet the Devil for the Glory of his Infernal Empire, and in order to satiate his Thirst of Revenge and Fury, would certainly stand to the Bargain, and not suffer his sworn Subjects and Vassals to be defrauded of their proper Dues.

I am sorry the Comparison will hold no further, and that these Wages have no Similitude with the Wages of other Servants in respect of their being useful and advantageous. But such is the Stupidity of the Devil's Servants that they undertake the vilest Drudgery without Promise of being at all the better for it, nay with expresse Assurance and solemn Warnings of being infinitely the worse.

Another

Death the Wages of Sin.

129

Discourse
IV.

Another Thing considerable in Wages is, that *they become due upon the Expiration of a certain Period of Time.* This Time is usually specified in the Contract. But the Devil with whom the poor Sinner contracts, not having in his Hands the Power of prolonging Life, or taking it away, and willing to flatter his deluded Servant with the utmost Prospect, agrees in general for that space of Time he shall live here on Earth. In all which Time he is to submit to his Guidance and Control, and whenever the Soul is separated from the Body, the Years of Servitude are over, and the Steward is to receive his Wages.

These prove of long Continuance, vastly unproportion'd to the short Duration of the oldest Age; these carry him into Eternity, not that happy Eternity of spotless Angels and glorified Spirits, where they shall always behold thy beauteous Face O Blessed God! but into an Eternity of Woe and Misery, with *Beelzebub* and the fallen Angels in Hell, where they shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the beatifick Presence.

Such are the Wages of unrepented Sin, and such will be the unavoidable Conclusion of a wicked Life, unless in due Time we bring forth the Fruits of true Repentance, which are new Obedience and actual Holiness.

K

May

Practical Discourse of

May I now intreat your further Patience while I shew in brief what Influence and Effects this important Doctrine ought to have upon us. And this is what I promised in the

Fourth and last Place. And *first, herein let us observe the unaccountable Folly of Sin.* What is it that a Man can propose to gain by it? Or if he could gain all the Wealth, all the Honour, all the Pleasure of the World, even the whole World it self, what would this Enjoyment signify to the Eternal Torments that he shall at last be punished with?

No one Instance of Folly is greater than over-rating Things to our Prejudice, and what a strange Opinion must that Man have of the Things of the World, who imagines it worth his while to be damned eternally for them? Would not that Person be accounted very stupid, who should prefer a few Minutes Ease to the Happiness of a great many Years, especially if this Happiness was not only to be forfeited, but Torments of the like Duration to be suffered thereby?

But that which increases the Folly in the case before us is, that an uncertain Measure of Time is prefer'd to Eternity. A Man in his right Wits would chuse rather to be wretched and miserable for a
few

Death the Wages of Sin.

131

few Years, than to be miserably undone for ever. Discourse
IV.

Suppose then that Religion, the Prayers, the Fastings, the Tears and continual Self-denial which are the eminent Branches of it, were grievous, irksom, and unpleasant, yet they do not make those miserable who perform them; but what if they did for a Time? yet considering the promised Rewards of observing, and the threatned Penalties of neglecting them, it would argue a great defect of Judgment, even *then* not to be strictly religious.

Secondly, Hence we may perceive likewise *the great Danger as well as Folly, of living in sinful Courses.* How dangerous do we account it to continue in infected Air, or under a ruinous Building?

While we remain in a state of Sin, we are at Enmity with God, and such are our unhappy Circumstances, that we are every Moment liable to Eternal Death, the Wages and Reward of Sin. And Lord, how should this make us hasten out for our Lives? How dare we live one Day in Sin lest we should die and perish in it at Night?

Every Sinner walks upon the very brink of Ruin, and whilst he continues such, he is self-condemned and given over to Eternal Death. And this Death follows immediately after his Soul and Body are dis-

united, which for ought he knows, may be very soon. He may perhaps in a Day, nay, it may be in an Hour or Moment's Time, be snatch'd away, and receive his Wages, and pass into a forlorn Condition, which is for ever the same. And does not this most clearly evidence the mighty Danger we are in during our wicked Lives? We are continually exposed to eternal Death, which may, for all we know, be very near, even at our Door.

Thirdly, The Consideration of Death's being the Wages of Sin may serve to direct us, *how both to avoid and conquer Temptations*. This Doctrine, when once we have thoroughly digested it, will make us always upon our Guard, and aware of the remotest approaches to Sin and Folly. We shall esteem it our greatest Enemy, and abhor it as our Bane and Destruction, and shall be vigilant against every Thing that looks that Way.

If we are surpris'd into Danger, the Remembrance of Eternal Death will fortify us with new Vigour and Resolution to make head and rally up our utmost Force and Courage. The Reason of unworthy Compliances is, because we do not duly consider the fatal Issue and irretrievable Misfortunes our Sins will lead us to. Those who keep the Sense of this bright and unful-

lied

Death the Wages of Sin.

133

Discourse
IV.

lied in their Minds, have Strength enough to resist and vanquish the Enemy.

O let us then, I most humbly and earnestly beseech you, upon all Occasions, be firmly perswaded that Sin and Folly will eternally undo us. Wherefore in good Time let us recollect with sober Seriousness, that the Wages of Sin is Death, and what this Death implies, *viz.* the loss of all that is good, a total privation of God's most delightful and glorious Presence, and our being afflicted with the sorest and most deadly Evils both here and for ever: And then we shall hardly be prevailed with, to commit Sin, or at least not to continue in a sinful State.

This Perswasion will be our Safe-guard and Defence, our Support and Shield against all the fiery Darts of the Wicked. And instead of the Wages of Sin, Eternal Death, we shall be entitled to the joyful Rewards of Holiness, comprehended in two Words, *Eternal Life*: Which, as our Apostle assures us in the same Verse of the Text, is *the Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

Fourthly, How signal is God's Mercy in sending us a Saviour to die for us? The Wages of Sin is Death, and that Death Eternal, and we all being Sinners, none of us could have escaped it: for our Guilt is

Practical Discourse of

of an undoing Malignity, and would certainly have brought this endless Destruction on every one of us.

But as God pitied us *in* this sad Condition, so his Compassion rescued us *out* of it. And altho' it was a Work of strange Mercy, it was to be done agreeably to divine Justice, so far as doing it in such a Way could possibly comport with *himself* and *us*.

And so God being injured by Man's Sins, he must have Satisfaction by his Sufferings: And therefore by that Method he would have him reconciled to his Majesty, and restored to Capacity of Pardon and Happiness.

But then tho' Man could suffer, his Sufferings *could not satisfy unless* they were *Eternal*; and then his Salvation and Redemption *to it* must have been impossible.

To this great Work therefore the Wisdom of God appointed *his Son*; who was *as willing* to undertake it, as he was *fit for* and *able to accomplish it*. He gave him first to be a *Man*, and *then a Sacrifice* for us; a most wonderful Mercy this, if we rightly consider God and our selves. For,

What is God? A Being infinitely perfect, and so perfectly blessed; and consequently could have no need of us either to *support* or *add* to his Felicity. Tho' if he had, he might have let us perish, and by his

Omni-

Death the Wages of Sin.

135

Omnipotence have produced far more excellent Creatures. And then,

Discount
IV.

What are *we*? Dust and Ashes, Vanity and Lumps of Sin. Such as of our selves can do God no Service, much less any Benefit, Things averse *from* him, as well as unlike to him, and as miserably *unwilling* as we are *unfit* to come near him.

Yet *we*, even *we* are they that Jesus died for, and redeemed by the Effusion of his most precious Blood, a Favour never to be parallel'd or expressed. All the Rhetorick in the World, and all the Orators who use that Rhetorick, cannot fully express the Greatness of it.

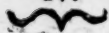
And as no Words can relate, so neither can the most dilated Thoughts ever comprehend it. For that Wretches who chose Sin, and Wrath, and Death, should by a dying God be ransom'd to Eternal Life, surpasses every Thing but Amazement; and Lord! how should this astonish us?

O Let us be careful to understand it aright, and to get a true Notion of the Design or Aim of this peerless Favour; which too many are apt to mistake, tho' the Error may be of dangerous Consequence.

To secure us from the same, we must know upon what Terms our Lord will save us; or *from* and to *what* he determin-

Discourse

IV.



ned to redeem us. And this the Apostle declares in his 2^d Chapter to *Titus*, and 14th Verse. *He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.* So that if we be not brought off from *all Iniquity*, or from *every deliberate Sin*, and also brought on to *Works of Obedience*, and to *zealous Performance* of every one of them incumbent on us; we are without the Limits of *Christ's Redemption*. And if we would be saved, we must look out for another Redeemer; these being the Conditions, without which, by our *Jesus*, there is no Salvation to be had.

Tho' as many as do thus, should continually think, what a black Accusation will be against them for it at the last Day. For when they stand at the Tribunal of the dreadful Judge, it shall there be openly charged upon them, that they would not forsake their vain Sins, their impure Delights, tho' the Son of God made his Death an Argument to perswade them to it.

And in the mean Time, O that Sinners would but duly consider and believe this, that our Lord shed his precious Blood, not only to redeem them from Misery and Sin, but to make them *zealous* in the Performance of all *Christian Duties*. Herein is so much Pity and Love, and sweet Conde-

scension

Death the Wages of Sin.

137

Discourse

IV.

scension on *his* Part, that it should even force them methinks to a better Mind, and to Amendment of Life. But if they will not be wrought on by these charming Words, let them be sure of this, that he who caus'd them to be spoken, will at length condemn them with as great, tho' just Severity, condemn them with a Sentence not to be revok'd, and to Torments insufferable, yet always to endure.

And as *they* are happy, unspeakably happy, who in the final Judgment have Jesus's Blood to plead for them ; so none can express the Misery of those, against whom it shall then rise and cry for Vengeance. Yet so it will do against all those Christians that it reclaims not from their Sins, and indues with celestial Grace.

Fifthly, To conclude : If Death be the certain Wages of Sin, then how *serious and speedy should we be in true Repentance* ? Since to be sinful is our great Unhappiness, to be penitent must be our bounden Duty ; and if we finally neglect it, we perish for ever. Disobedience therefore being our Fault, let us duly remember the Instances of it, and lay them deeply to Heart. Let us well consider our respective Misdoings, and not only humbly confess and unfeignedly lament, but utterly forsake them.

Be

Be they open or secret ; lesser or greater ; of Pleasure or of Profit ; lately taken up, or of long Continuance ; let them all be bewailed, and finally rejected and detested by us.

And to perfect our Repentance, let us turn our past Neglects into zealous Duty ; and our licentious Practices into pious Strictness. And let us do it immediately, because our Days are few, and our Time is uncertain ; and being once past, shall never be repeated.

If hitherto we have not begun Repentance, let it now commence, and be carried on to the End of our Life. Let us not only think of the Great Work, and faintly intend, but firmly purpose and resolve upon it : And let our Purpose be so steadfast as no Temptation may shake, or flattering Occurrence ever unfix ; then we may hope for an happy Issue. For so our Sins shall be pardoned, our ill Habits dissolved, and we renewed in our Minds, and set right in our Ways. The Judgments we deserve we may hope shall be averted, and that God will favour us with all needful Blessings. Nor will he dispense only common Blessings to us, but his precious Graces of all sorts ; all things needful for our Souls as well as all things for our Bodies ; all good things that pertain to this Life,

Death the Wages of Sin.

139

Discourse
IV.

Life, and all that are better, as belonging to the next. Which God of his infinite Mercy vouchsafe us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord; To whom with the Eternally Blessed Spirit, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

P R A C-



D

C

Fif

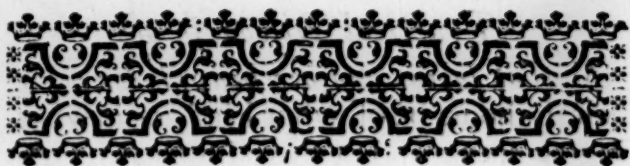
Com

a

J



for

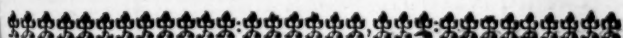


PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

OF

Christ's gracious Call to
Sinners.

*Fifth Discourse for the Fourth Sunday
in LENT.*



St. MAT. II. 28.

*Come unto me all ye that labour and
are heavy laden, and I will give
you rest.*



V H I C H Words are a most Discour^{se}
kind Incouragement, and V.
gracious Invitation to all
who are grieved with Sin,
or oppressed with Suffer-
ings, to come to Christ
for Relief and Comfort.

All

Practical Discourse of

All that labour and are heavy laden; let their Labours be of what kind, or in what Degree soever. Let their Burthen be never so grievous and intolerable, provided they approach our Lord with Humility, Faith, and Reverence, they may depend upon his Protection and Assistance, he having so lovingly called them to come unto him.

Sensible he was of the miserable and exposed State of Mankind; he knew they were subject to sundry Accidents and Misfortunes, which imbitter'd their best Enjoyments, and against which there was no Defence. And he saw likewise what a poor, dispirited, dejected, melancholy Creature Man is, when innumerable Evils come about him.

This it was which moved the compassionate Disposition of our blessed Saviour to propose himself (if we would be but at the Pains of coming to him) as an infallible Method to procure us the most desirable Ease and Quiet.

But then it must be remembred, that the rest here promised to all *that labour and are heavy laden*, depends intirely upon their coming to Chriff, in such a Manner and so exactly qualified as he requires.

In order to give you a right Notion both of the Invitation it self, in the former

the
bea
wh
this
I
sup
tole
We
gro
the
had
thou
had

mer Part of the Verse, and of the Bene- Discourse
fits of complying with it in the latter, ^{V.}
I shall endeavour at four Particulars.

- I. I shall shew who are intended by this Expression, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden.*
- II. What is intended by their coming to Christ their Saviour.
- III. I shall explain how he gives Rest to all those that come unto him.
- IV. And *lastly*, I shall use my best Endeavours to render this so kind and indearing an Invitation effectual, by urging our selves, by all possible Inducements to be obedient to it.

First, I am to enquire *what is meant by these Words, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, that so we may understand what manner of Persons they are, to whom this Invitation does belong.

Now to labour and to be heavy laden, supposes that there is some severe and intolerable Burden, some insupportable Weight and Pressure, under which we groan. And because our Lord spake these Words to the *Jews*, with whom he had frequent Conference; it may justly be thought that his *first* Intention in them, had regard to the *ceremonial Law*, a
Yoke

Yoke which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear; from which he promises to grant them a full and perpetual Discharge, in Case they would consent to become his Disciples and follow him.

But however this may be allow'd to be the original Import, and immediate Signification, and in this Sense, the weary and heavy laden, were those who, subjected to the Burthen of the Law (made still heavier, and prodigiously aggravated by the several Additions of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*) desired and longed to be delivered from it, and so these are they to whom the Invitation is *first* directed; yet it is very applicable to every one of us, who though, blessed be the most high God, we do not labour under the same troublesom uneasy Yoke, are however equally to be comprehended in the Expression of being equally liable to be oppress'd and unmercifully loaded; not indeed with ceremonial Observances and unwritten Traditions, but with a Weight infinitely more grievous and afflictive, I mean the insupportable Burden of Sin.

This the Psalmist, who was a mournful true Penitent, affirms to be *a sore burden, too heavy for him to bear, Psal. 38. 4.*
And

And at the Third Verse, he declares that there *was no Health in his Flesh, because of God's Displeasure, neither was there any Rest in his Bones, by reason of his Sins.*

The Sense of Guilt creates us much Trouble and Disquiet of Soul, and they who are under those unhappy Circumstances may be properly said to labour and be heavy laden; and consequently *they*, as well as the *Jews* are intended in this Expression, and the very Persons whom the merciful Jesus had a special Eye to; upon which Account, I shall beg leave to insist the longer upon them.

But after all that has been said, is it not somewhat strange, that Sin should be accounted burdensom and full of Trouble, when we perceive the Generality of Christians so eagerly ingaged in the Pursuit and Practice of it? Yet thus alas! to our Shame and Sorrow be it spoken, even thus it is.

Deluded by the gay and promising Image of Advantages to be gain'd, or of considerable Evils to be avoided, we boldly venture on in the destructive Paths of Folly, till at last the bitter Reproaches and stinging Horror of an awaken'd Conscience begin to take off from our Opinion of the Pleasures and Profits of Sin, and

L

make

make us experimentally acknowledge not only the Vanity and Dissatisfaction, but the wretched Drudgery and heavy Burden of it.

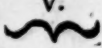
Possible it is, that Men by long continuance in Sin, may have brought themselves to be past all Sense and Feeling of it. They may be so far harden'd as even to glory in their Shame, and to rejoice in the Commission of those Crimes which they ought rather to weep most bitterly for, and with all their Hearts and Souls to lament and abhor.

Now such egregious Offenders as these cannot be they to whom the Invitation of the Text belongs, because they are not the weary and heavy laden; they are without Remorse and Consciouness of their Guilt; without an awful Fear or suitable Apprehensions of their deserved Punishment.

Whereas the peculiar Badge of those whom our Lord so kindly invites to come unto him is, that they be weary and heavy laden with the Burden of their Sins, which denotes the tenderest Sense and the most fearful, anxious, uneasy Thoughts they entertain concerning them; such as have Minds deeply possessed of the filthy odious Nature of Sin, and the fatal Consequences and unavoidable Danger of it.

They stedfastly believe all Sin to be a
flat

flat Contradiction to the unpolluted Es-
sence of the Great *Jehovah*, and an heinous
Deviation from those equitable Rules he
has ordained for us to square our Thoughts,
Words and Actions by.

Discourse
V.


But he who is scared and reprobate in Sin, sees nothing of the Turpitude of it, but is much delighted with those unworthy and ungenerous Practices, which a right Judgment of the Odiousness of them teaches the Penitent to be quite weary of. So that what in the Sinner's Estimation passes for pleasant and advantageous, is in the better Judgment, and sober Estimate of good Men, shameful, sorrowful, and pernicious.

This we shall all most infallibly find Sin to be, when once we permit our selves to view it as it is, naked and free from the plausible Disguises in which the Tempter and our own carnal Appetites have endeavoured to represent it.

And if we retain the least Sparks of Freedom and Sincerity, will it not be very natural, from a thorough Conviction of the vile Nature of Sin, to be carried on to the greatest Uneasiness and Regret in continuing under the remembrance of it? Especially when we must at the same Time be as sadly sensible of the present Danger of temporal Judgments, and the future e-
L 2 verlasting

Practical Discourse of
 everlasting Destruction from the Presence of
 God?

And what I beseech you can we conceive more reasonably terrifying than such a dismal Prospect as this? Is not this a prevailing Argument whereby to demonstrate the Uneasiness and Danger of an impious Life?

And yet the Wicked walk erect, and even laugh and sing, and are undaunted under it. But does this Deportment proceed from the Security of their Souls? O not! But rather from the Senselessness and Stupidity which an angry God has by degrees suffer'd to grow upon them. And their Danger is not the less, nor their Burden lighter, because, poor miserable Wretches, they are so unhappy as to remain insensible of them.

Could they but once (and God of His Infinite Mercy and Goodness grant that at some time before they die they may) divested of the Corruptions of the World thro' Lust, arrive to the full Comprehension of the Folly and Danger of Sin, they would soon then come up to the strictest Propriety, and utmost Extent, of *all ye that labour and are heavy laden.*

By serious and due Consideration, they would alter their Notions of Vice, and think it no longer Matter of Sport or Merriment;

ment; but an unnecessary Incumbrance and servile Yoke. Which would inevitably cause the greatest Pain and Sorrow, and make them exert their utmost Force, to rescue themselves from the cruel usurp'd Authority of the most Unreasonable and Arbitrary Government. Then would they complain, and sigh, and groan, and be full of Anguish; and being prick'd in Heart, they would earnestly beg of God to have Mercy upon them, and would humbly enquire of Men what they should do in order to be delivered from their burdensome State.

But I must not forget another sort of Persons who have also a comfortable share in our Lord's Invitation. I mean, *those that are visited with Afflictions, and are under the Chastisements of Heaven.* For *these* may as well be, and assuredly are intended by this Expression, of *All that labour and are heavy laden.*

And here methinks I need make no Distinction betwixt the Sinner and the good Man, both being commonly touched with the Misfortunes and Calamities of Life, and sensible of the Uneasiness, and heavy laden with the Pressures of them.

Let us but consider how burdensome and tedious a Thing it is to spin out whole wearisome Days and Nights in a painful, ne-

cessitous, disconsolate, and distressed Condition. This is what we all have a keen and too resentful a Sense of. Wherefore no Time, nor Skill is required to set forth the heaviness of a Burden which *some* have felt, and *all* acknowledge to be so.

Let it suffice to observe to our Peace and Comfort, that our gracious Lord is pleased to commiserate our deplorable Circumstances, and to offer himself as our best Support and only Refuge under them.

It may fall out, that our Load shall receive its *last* and *utmost* Aggravation from the Concurrence of *temporal* Evils, and the Sense and Guilt of *spiritual* ones. Whilst our Minds are filled with Horror and Confusion for our Sins, we may perhaps at the same Instant find our Affairs without, in a very melancholy and bad Condition, presaging and big with Grief and Sorrow. And when the Case stands thus with us, how must we be dejected and labour in perpetual Disquiet? Then certainly, if ever, we come within the Number of those to whom our Saviour addresses himself, the weary and heavy laden.

I have given a large Account of these, and fully shewn who may be intended by that Expression, either the Jews, or all Sinners; or all those that are in any kind of Adversity. I proceed *Secondly,*

Christ's gracious Call to Sinners.

151

Secondly, To shew what is included in their coming to Christ. Come unto me, says our Saviour; believe in me, embrace my Doctrine, and be sincere in your Obedience to it; become my Disciples and Followers, and submit to the Discipline and Methods of my spiritual Kingdom.

Discourse
V.

In general, this is meant by coming to Christ; but then with respect to the three kinds of Persons that labour and are weary and heavy laden, I shall instance in some particular Acts of Homage and Obedience wherein they may effectually, and to their unspeakable Comfort come unto him. And,

First, As to the Jew who is primarily intended; he comes to Christ by being thoroughly convinced of the reality of his Mission, that he is the true Messiah, their Deliverer sent from God, to introduce a more substantial, more spiritual Worship than what had been before divulged by Moses and their Fore-fathers.

And so the Text is an affectionate and tender Call to that stiff-necked and perverse Generation wherein our Saviour liv'd. So it is a noble and sublime Effect of his forgiving and most compassionate Temper, that notwithstanding the malicious Reproaches they had cast upon him, and the many spiteful Injuries they had

done unto him as Enemies, he was desirous and willing still to admit them upon Terms of Respect and Friendship into his Favour.

Secondly, Those that are weary and heavy laden with a Sense of the Odiousness and Danger of their repeated Sins; these may be said to come to Christ, when in humble Confidence of his vast and all-sufficient Merits, they beg to have their Fears quelled and silenced, their Scruples satisfied, and themselves secured from the Wrath and Vengeance of an angry God. When they lay themselves prostrate at the Throne of Grace, and ardently implore the Benefits of their Saviour's Satisfaction, that they may be washed and made clean, and perfectly healed in the Streams of his most precious Blood shed for their Impieties.

The Stedfastness and Vehemency of the Penitent's Faith, the cordial Sincerity of his Hatred and Grief; the Fervency and Intenseness of his Devotions, his strict Self-denial, generous Bounty, and liberal Almsgiving, are Things our Lord principally regards in their coming to him.

We are to believe, without the least Doubt or Hesitancy, the whole Narrative of his most holy Doctrine and exemplary Life, and the precious Atonement made for us by his ignominious, cruel and cursed

Christ's gracious Call to Sinners. 153

fed Death. Upon *this* Atonement we are to rely and discard all Hopes, and even all possibility of Relief from the Interest we may have in God as his *Creatures*, which, to be sure, is over-ballanced and forfeited by our crying Guilt as *Sinners*.

Discourse
V.

If we would come to Christ as we ought, we must learn first to go out of our selves by a deep and confirmed Humility, ascribing to God all the Honour and Glory of our best Performances, and taking nothing but Shame, Dishonour, Vileness and Imperfection to our unworthy selves.

I may safely affirm, that the Foundation of our Approaches to Christ is to be laid in Meekness and Lowliness of Heart, and is to be perfected by a Life of new Obedience and actual Holiness.

But if we wilfully mistake in our Approaches, to what can we ascribe the hideous Clamours and restless Agonies of our guilty Minds, the confounding Fears and unanswerable Reproaches of a self-condemning Breast? To what, I say, can we ascribe these dismal Consequences of Sin, but to our *not rightly* or *not at all* applying this Remedy, which would easily cure the Distemper, and restore Ease and Tranquility where the want of them is so sensibly perceived?

Christ

Christ has inform'd us how to silence in good degree, and almost totally to extinguish the Disorders that arise from wicked Habits ; and the way in short to effect this, is by coming to him, who with extended Arms of tenderest Mercy, stands ready to receive us ; who graciously waits for us, and diligently improves every Opportunity of demonstrating his Care, and Love, and Affection towards us.

What the Psalmist says of the Ungodly, may be applied here ; *The Ungodly is so proud, that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his Thoughts*, Psal. 10. 4. The Sinner goes on obstinately, and flights all Offers of Grace and Redemption, makes no Application for divine Mercy, but tramples under foot, as useless and insignificant, the Blood of Jesus. He has no Thought nor Concern upon him, what he shall do to be saved, and how to gain a Title to the Advantages of that most precious Blood ; whereas the true Penitent takes quite other Measures.

Being weary of Sin, and grown averse from his wonted Inclinations to it, he makes it his chief Concern to shake off the Burden of it by coming to Christ : And the unfeigned Language of his relenting Soul in that important Juncture is with Regret and Abhorrence.

Me-

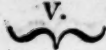
Christ's gracious Call to Sinners. 155

Methinks I see him in his Retirement, Discourse
V.
kneeling in the most submissive and reverend Manner, sometimes perhaps prostrating more humbly with his Face to the Ground, his Eyes flowing with salt and brackish Tears, and mingling them with the very Dust of the Ground, and passionately crying out to the God of Heaven in these or the like patheticall Expressions.

Most Just and Righteous God, I blush, am ashamed, and confounded, when I consider how frequently and grievously I have offended thy Divineſt Majesty. I am almost overcome with the Sense of my manifold Miscarriages, and the Riches of thy Forbearance and long Suffering towards me; and I have no whither to go but to thy dearest self; for all my Hope is *in* thee, and all my Help is *with* thee, and all my Happiness is *of* and *from* thee, and how unspeakably miserable shall I be *without* thee? Think not Scorn of me therefore, O indulgent, merciful Father; but have Pity upon me, have Pity upon me, O thou gracious Lover of Souls, and lift up the Light of thy Countenance upon me, and instantly deliver thy lost Sheep, thy returning Prodigal Son, thy helpless poor unworthy Servant from that Bondage and Misery which my repeated Trespasses and Sins have brought me to.

Discourse

V.

 I confess, O righteous Lord, from the bottom of my Heart, that I am highly unworthy of the least of thy Mercies ; but through thy sanctifying Grace, I know I am as yet capable of them. Communicate to me, I beseech thee, such an abundant Measure of thy holy Spirit, as may enable me to come unto thee in such a Manner as thou may'st think fit to receive me.

Receive me, good Lord, receive me, I pray thee, who am sore vexed, and grieved, and wearied with the Burden of my Sins. O let the Merits of thy dearest Son's most precious immaculate Blood, speak for me, and supply whatsoever is wanting to perfect my Repentance, and procure my Pardon.

This, or something like this, is the Language of every true Penitent in his coming to Christ: He beseeches God to shew him Mercy for Christ Jesus sake ; he has always *him*, and *none* but *him*, and *his* Mediation and Intercession in all his Thoughts, which are regulated and brought into Subjection by it.

Thirdly, As to those that are afflicted with *temporal* Calamities of any kind, their coming to Christ denotes their Assurance of an Haven of Rest, after they have passed the Waves of this troublesome World;

World; and their begging God, for Christ's sake, either to remove or alleviate their Misfortunes, or else to give them Patience, Constancy, and Resignation under them, even as he of his infinite Wisdom shall judge best for them.

In doing this, it ought to be our main Endeavour to fix our Hopes and Expectations upon heavenly Objects, without over much relying on the ordinary Means that may be safely made Use of for our Recovery. Whatever the Success of those Means proves, we are to esteem the Advantages deriv'd from them to be the pure Gift and Blessing of God.

But whilst we place too much of our Trust and Confidence upon the visible and subordinate Occasions of Relief; we mightily detract from the Honour of him, who both administers these Occasions, and prospers them.

Coming to Christ then, as it hath Relation to those that are miserable, through bodily Sufferings, must certainly import our looking up to him for Redress of all our Difficulties, and for Security and Preservation from all Dangers.

It imports too besides, our leaving the Issue and Conclusion to him, not doubting but he'll effectually consult our Happiness and Welfare, tho' by Methods to

Discourse us the most unlikely to promote his Pur-
 V. poses.

They who sink under their Load, and do not frequently call upon God for his Help and Succour; they also, who put too great Confidence in human Means, these are the Men that have no pretence to Help from our merciful Lord; because they will not give themselves the Trouble of coming to him. But such as come unto him by making suitable and pressing Instances, will assuredly reap the Benefit of it in obtaining the Rest promised by our blessed Lord; which leads me to explain,

Thirdly, *The Promise contained in these Words, I will give you Rest; Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest; where I am to consider how our Saviour gives Rest unto all that come unto him.*

Now there being three several kinds of Burdens which may be intimated in that Expression of being *weary and heavy laden*, from these three different Burdens, does our complying with Christ's Invitation, afford the surest and most comfortable Release.

The *Jews*, whose Necks were galled with the number and rigour of their ceremonial Rites, by embracing the Doctrine

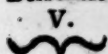
ctrine of the Gospel, and believing our Saviour to be the promised Messiah, were immediately discharged from what was purely *ceremonial* in their Law, and stood obliged only to the *moral* and *immutable* Part of it; so that their Grievances were instantly redress'd upon their coming into the spiritual Religion, and professing the holy Name of Jesus.

They were from that very Minute they became Profelytes to Christ, no longer in a State of Servitude and Weakness, but in the happy Condition of Sons and Heirs. Their way of Worship was not now as it had long been, typical, and full of obscure Representations, but all was rendred clear and easy, obvious and intelligible to them. This is the Rest which was not only promised, but apparently and eminently given to the Jews: Thus were they eased of their Load by coming to Christ.

But let me observe to you another sort of Rest, wherein *we* are *abundantly more* concerned than in that which particularly regards the Disciples of *Moses*, I mean the sweet and comfortable Rest that is given to such as labour under the Sense of their Guilt and Sin. *A wounded Spirit who can bear?* The natural Courage and manly Spirit of a Man will support him under bodily

Discourse

V.



dily Pains and outward Afflictions ; but the Terrors and Agonies of a wicked Mind, Lord ! how heavy and insupportable is the Burden of them ?

Shame and Dishonour are the natural Fruits of vitious Courses, which continually perplex us with hideous Apprehensions and confounding Fears. Against these we have no Shelter, but what is infinitely more hazardous than the Disease, and tends to the spreading of it.

A reprobate and feared Conscience, however it may be thought an Happiness by some, as keeping them insensible of Danger, and free from Fear, is yet far, very far from being a sufficient Guard and Security against them. Indeed it may be compared to a strong Opiate, given to assuage extreme Pain for the present ; which frequently casts the Patient into the Sleep of Death.

So indeed our being harden'd in Sin may abate our Fears, but it takes away at the same time all Possibility of preventing those fatal Dangers from whence they arise ; It casts us into a spiritual Lethargy, where void of Feeling, we are carried on to the Conclusion and Wages of Sin, Eternal Death. This is a false, a dangerous Rest, that ends in everlasting Misery.

But

But the Rest which our Saviour gives to oppressed and weary Sinners, who in Faith, Humility, Repentance, and Devotion, come unto him, is such as will not draw us into Danger, but will most happily, yea most gloriously remove all Danger from us.

By coming to him we shall be deliver'd from our Offences; from the Sting and Horror of them in this Life, and from the Commission and Punishment of them in the next.

The Wearisomness of Sin is caused by an hearty inward Sense of the Turpitude of it, and the evil Consequences that attend it. Now the Nature of Sin *is not, cannot* be reversed by coming to Christ; still Sin *is* and ever *must* be odious and abominable. But then the Consequences of Sin, upon which the Horror and Sting of it is chiefly founded, these our Saviour takes away, and gives the Sinner firm Hopes and good Assurance of avoiding by his Interposition, the Portion his manifold Offences have deserv'd, and attaining that Felicity, which it was not in the Power of the best of his own Endeavours to merit.

And O! What a blessed Alteration is this for a poor unworthy depending Creature, just perishing with Sorrow and Heaviness for his Sins and Follies, to be thus easily, thus effectually relieved from the

M

Bur-



Burden of them? What is there that can be matter of Sorrow to him who by coming to his merciful Lord has a Title to Rest? Rest in *this* World most comfortable and refreshing, and in the *next* World endless and inviolable?

For we must not till we arrive at our Journey's End, expect intire Ease and Satisfaction from the Fatigue and Labours that will always necessarily attend it.

However, tho' the Rest our Lord affords his faithful Servants here, be short of that perfect Rest he will give them hereafter, when they shall for ever rest from their Labours; yet even this imperfect, this changeable Rest is vastly preferable to all the World besides, as it calms the Storms, and pacifies the Confusions of a Mind at Enmity with God, and conveys to us a pleasing transporting Prospect of living in the blissful Enjoyment of God and Christ, Angels and Saints, for ever and for ever.

Let him then that means to come to Christ in his *first* Approaches, verily believe that he will prove as his other Name imports, *Jesus* a Saviour to him, and this Belief having a sure Foundation which cannot fail, is an inexhaustible Fountain of secret Joy and Comfort.

When-ever then the Remembrance of thy former Sins sits uneasily upon thy Mind,
thou

thou hast no more to do but to retreat a little from the World, and earnestly beg of God *the Grace of Tears*, as St. *Austin* calls it, solemnly resolving that by the divine Aids, thou wilt avoid Sin for the future, and humbly believing that all that's past is not only freely pardoned, but quite forgotten, blotted out and wiped away by Virtue of that precious Blood which Christ shed upon the Cross for the Propitiation of them.

In this Propitiation thou mayest hope for Support and Strength against all thine Adversaries. A due Reflection upon this propitiatory Sacrifice will assuredly minister Comfort, Delight, and Satisfaction inexpressible to thee.

Observe then I pray, a most remarkable Difference betwixt the obstinate Sinner and the mournful Penitent; the *one* confounded with the dismal Apprehensions of God's sore Vengeance and just Indignation against him, and having not the least tolerable Pretensions to his Mercy, frets and fumes, and is in perpetual Horror and Trouble. The *other*, viz. the contrite, humble, bleeding Penitent is full of Hopes, directly appeals from the Bar of impartial Justice to the Throne of infinite exulting Mercy, where he meets with a favourable Reception and most hearty Welcome.

Practical Discourse of

Thirdly and Lastly, Persons in Distress by coming to Christ obtain Rest and Ease from their respective Sorrows and Sufferings, tho' never so grievous, or never so lasting.

By coming to Christ they learn the true Nature and Condition of this miserable cloudy World, which is no more than a state of Discipline or Probation for another infinitely more happy, more illustrious than this.

And what can we expect to meet in a state of Trial, but violent Temptations and sore Travel? Or why should we repine and fret our selves when we are sure they are designed for our Good, and are capable of improving it?

I confess, were there no other Life, we might have Reason to be cast down, and sore vexed and disquieted at the several Crosses, Losses, and Disappointments of this; but O blessed, thrice, and for ever blessed be the Father of Mercies and God of all Comforts, there is a Life of Rest and Peace, of Joy and Glory, of Happiness and Immortality; and as our Afflictions may be considerable Instruments in making us strictly pious, and heavenly-minded now, and so eternally happy hereafter, these are Arguments so strong and powerful that the worst of Miseries may be made more tolerable by them.

And

And therefore I farther add, when we come to consider our selves, not only as Creatures, but as the Redeem'd of the Lord, as Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, nay verily as Coheirs with the blessed Jesus, we shall thus get above the low Satisfaction and empty Enjoyments of this checker'd Life, and shall rejoyce and triumph in despite of the Hardships and Menaces of it. The devout Christian becomes more than Conqueror thro' him that loved him, and gave himself for him, he is vastly an Over-match for the sharpest Encounter he may meet with, and through Christ strengthening him he can do all Things.

Neither Sedition in the City, nor Tyranny in the Court, nor Faction in the Country, can overset his well composed Mind. If the Pillars of the Earth should break, or the Axle Tree of Heaven should crack, and the vast Machine of the World should tumble about his Ears, it would crush him fearless and unconcerned with its Ruins. To this Effect the famous *Lyrick* Poet delivers himself: And to the same Sense the Royal *Psalmist* sings, and in a poetick Strain too; only we must conceive him in a far higher Rapture, and also speaking by a better Spirit, as being divinely inspired. For thus he begins his *six* and *fortieth* *Psalms*;

Discourse

V.

will we not fear, tho' the Earth be removed, and the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea; tho' the Waters thereof rage and swell; and the Mountains shake at the Tempest of the same.

The beginning of his 27th Psalm runs thus: *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; Whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my Life, of whom then shall I be afraid?* Both these emphatical Places do plainly teach us, that they who have God for their Refuge and Strength in *this* World, and for their Light and Salvation in the *next*, have no just Cause to fear any Evils that threaten or betide them; they have no Reason to be dismayed, because they have an Interest in one out of the reach of all Accidents, that *can* and *will* protect them. *I will love thee, O Lord my Strength*, says every good Man in his Afflictions as well as *David. The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; My God, my Strength in whom I will trust, my Buckler, and the horn of my Salvation, and my high Tower. In my Distress I will call upon the Lord, and cry unto my God, Psal. 18. 1, 2, 6.*

From him he gains Assurance of the Pardon of his Sins, which frees him from the dismal Horrors and insupportable Torments of them.

From

From him he has comfortable Prefaces of an approaching happy Eternity, which renders him brave and undaunted amidst the Calamities of the present World, and fills his Mind with sweet Complacency and high Delight.

So every way pleasing and advantageous is the Advice and Exhortation of coming to Christ, who, as we have heard, gives Rest, and Ease, and Happiness to all sorts of Persons, whether they be *Jews*, and so are intirely free from the rigorous Observance of the Ceremonial Law: Or whether they be penitent Christians, and so are delivered from the Remorse of Conscience, which disturbs the Repose of their *inward* Man. Or, Lastly, Whether they are afflicted in Mind, Body, or Estate, and so are supported under, or delivered from such Pains and Grievances as vex and molest their *outward*.

This methinks should prevail with all that have any real Love or hearty Concern for themselves, to be resolute, eager and zealous in coming to Christ. Which that we may all be, I proposed in the

Fourth and last Place, To press upon you as a proper Application of the whole. And it may be thought unaccountable, and unaccountable in Truth it is, that after so affectionate and moving, so extensive and winning an In-

Discourse

V.

we should for the generality of us, be so backward and negligent in complying with it.

The Proposal is of so great Advantage to us, and the Terms on *our* Side so easy to be performed, that one might expect naturally to see all the Disciples of our dearest Lord and Master running hastily to him, striving so far as they were able, to follow his Steps, and imitate the bright Example he has set them.

But a little Enquiry will inform us, that Matters are far otherwise; for instead of coming to Christ by copying after the Pattern of *his* Life, how scandalously do *our* Lives reproach him? To particularize would take too much of our Time, and be too great an Intrusion on your Patience.

But because our Lord in the Verse immediately following the Text has glanced at those Vertues which are the distinguishing Marks of a good Christian, *viz.* Humbleness of Mind, and Meekness of Heart, which are in his Sight of great Price; I can't forbear observing, how very contrary our usual Deportment is to it. For where is that Meekness and Lowliness of Heart, that Modesty, Courtesy, and candid Openness, which should be the Ornaments of our Christian Profession?

How

Christ's gracious Call to Sinners. 169

How are Men swell'd and puff'd up with Riches and Honour? High Preferment and a plentiful Fortune turn their Heads quite topzy turvy, and exalt them vastly above their meaner Brethren.

Discourse
V.

Were a Man who knew nothing of human Affairs permitted to take a short View of Things, upon observing the strange Distance and unmeasurable Inequality betwixt the Poor and the Rich, the Ignorant and the Learned, he would be inclinable to think we had not all the same common Nature; he would naturally suppose the Poor and Illiterate to have been of a lower Class in the Creation, form'd with *less Care*, and placed to *less Advantage*.

A condescending, affable Behaviour is such a graceful Qualification, and argues such a truly Christian Spirit, and generous Disposition, that Haughtiness and High-mindedness ought to be for ever banished. And nothing of that kind should be seen amongst the cultivated and improved Part of Mankind. And yet is any thing more observable, than that Pride and Arrogancy amongst other crying Sins are too rife and predominant amongst us.

But however, tho' this be an honest Representation of our Case, we have here a sovereign Remedy prescribed to cure all our Maladies. Come to Christ, and you may

Discourse

V.

may be effectually provided against all your Ailments, whether they be Temptations or Sins, Troubles or Fears, do but this one thing; Repent heartily of all the Errors and Miscarriages of your Life past, make it appear that you are weary and heavy laden. And then here's an universal Supply against Trouble of Mind, and against all the Evils and Misfortunes that may befall ones Body or Estate, against the Fears of Death, and the dreadful Repentance and Vengeance of Sin, which unavoidably follow it.

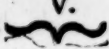
To sum up all then in this most pathetic Invitation. And,

First in general; Come all ye that labour and are heavy laden; Come all ye that are overwhelmed in Misery, and quite dispirited with Tribulation and Anguish of Spirit; come and taste the Bounties of your God, come to your Redeemer, and he'll kindly receive you.

In all Circumstances and Conditions of Life, in Time of Sicknes, at the Hour of Death, and at the Day of Judgment, he'll befriend you. He'll be your Shield and Defence, your Comfort and Support. When your Breath goes out of your Body, and your Heart and your Flesh shall fail you, then he will be *the Strength of your Heart, and your Portion for ever.*

This

Christ's gracious Call to Sinners. 171

This Invitation is in general. But more *Discourse*
particularly I apply my self *first* to the *v.*
Jews. 

Come then, O ye unbelieving, hard-hearted, unthankful, deluded People, come to the Messiah, promised to your Fore-fathers, and he'll overlook your Hatred and Malice, and receive you graciously.

Come O ye contrite and humble Penitents, and you shall be presently eased of the heavy Weight and sore Burden of your Sins; your Peace shall be made by the Cross of Christ; and the Enmity betwixt God and you shall by his meritorious Death and gracious Intercession, be made up and healed for ever. And as an unquestionable Evidence to assure you that your Sins are fully pardoned, he'll fortify you against them by the Grace of his holy Spirit for the Time to come.

Come all ye that are in Trouble, Sorrow, Need, Sicknefs, or any kind of Adversity: Come to your Saviour, the Lord, the most mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and he'll give you Strength and Succour, Ease and Refreshment. Your Affairs, how gloomy, sad, and unpromising soever at present, shall receive Advantage from Christ your Saviour. Either they shall be taken away from you, or you removed from them, or enabled

Discourse

V.

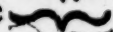
may be effectually provided against all your Ailments, whether they be Temptations or Sins, Troubles or Fears, do but this one thing; Repent heartily of all the Errors and Miscarriages of your Life past, make it appear that you are weary and heavy laden. And then here's an universal Supply against Trouble of Mind, and against all the Evils and Misfortunes that may befall ones Body or Estate, against the Fears of Death, and the dreadful Recompence and Vengeance of Sin, which unavoidably follow it.

To sum up all then in this most pathetic Invitation. And,

First in general; Come all ye that labour and are heavy laden; Come all ye that are overwhelmed in Misery, and quite dispirited with Tribulation and Anguish of Spirit; come and taste the Bounties of your God, come to your Redeemer, and he'll kindly receive you.

In all Circumstances and Conditions of Life, in Time of Sickness, at the Hour of Death, and at the Day of Judgment, he'll befriend you. He'll be your Shield and Defence, your Comfort and Support. When your Breath goes out of your Body, and your Heart and your Flesh shall fail you, then he will be *the Strength of your Heart, and your Portion for ever.*
This

Christ's gracious Call to Sinners. 171

This Invitation is in general. But more ^{Discourse} particularly I apply my self *first* to the ^{V.}  *Jews.*

Come then, O ye unbelieving, hard-hearted, unthankful, deluded People, come to the Messiah, promised to your Fore-fathers, and he'll overlook your Hatred and Malice, and receive you graciously.

Come O ye contrite and humble Penitents, and you shall be presently eased of the heavy Weight and sore Burden of your Sins; your Peace shall be made by the Cross of Christ; and the Enmity betwixt God and you shall by his meritorious Death and gracious Intercession, be made up and healed for ever. And as an unquestionable Evidence to assure you that your Sins are fully pardoned, he'll fortify you against them by the Grace of his holy Spirit for the Time to come.

Come all ye that are in Trouble, Sorrow, Need, Sicknefs, or any kind of Adversity: Come to your Saviour, the Lord, the most mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and he'll give you Strength and Succour, Ease and Refreshment. Your Affairs, how gloomy, sad, and unpromising soever at present, shall receive Advantage from Christ your Saviour. Either they shall be taken away from you, or you removed from them, or enabled

Discourse

V.

bled better to endure them. The Power of Christ is infinite, and in the terriblest Commotions, and most violent Revolutions he will be gracious to all such as come unto him.

In fine, come all ye that labour and are heavy laden; be your Case what it will, you are invited to Christ. Be your Troubles never so many and great, and be your Sins never so numerous and repeated, still God's Mercies are far more numerous, and so long they are remissible, and if we repent, can be no insuperable Hindrance of our Happiness—Our Lord's Invitation is universal and illimited; directed not to *this* or *that* particular Sinner, but to every one without Exception of any. He does not say, Come ye, whose Sins have been just so great, or whose Sins have been just so many, or whose Relapses have been just so frequent, and let the rest stand off, but come all, whatever Sinners you are, or whatever your Sins have been.

And verily, were our Sins ten Times, or ten thousand Times as numerous and heinous as they are; such is the Efficacy of Christ's precious Blood, and the Value of his vast and all-sufficient Merits, as to cleanse us from their Guilt, and screen us from the Punishment which they deserve.

May

Christ's gracious Call to Sinners.

173

May we all then in the Name of ^{Discourse} God, and for the Lord Jesus's Sake as well as our own, be perswaded truly and earnestly to leave our former Sins, and to come unto Christ by Faith and Repentance, Humility and Devotion, Weeping, Fasting, and Mourning, and liberal Alms-giving. And may we put our whole Trust and Confidence in his bitter Passion, blessed Merits, and mighty Intercession, and upon every Occasion apply to him for his efficacious Aids ; so shall we obtain large, exceeding large Degrees of Rest and Tranquility in this mortal Life. So shall we obtain a sure and indisputable, a joyful and never failing Title to the sublime Perfection and glorious Consummation of them in the Life to come. Which God of his infinite Goodness and Mercy grant unto us all for Jesus Christ's Sake, to whom with the eternal Spirit, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

P R A C.

1871

1

S

S

S

1871

ES

PO

ST

CO



PRACTICAL DISCOURSES

OF


The Christian's Pattern.

*Sixth Discourse for the Fifth Sunday
in LENT.*



St. MAT. II. Part of the 29th
Verse.

—*Learn of me.*

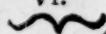
FTER so solemn and kind Discourse
VI.
an Invitation to the weary
and heavy laden, to come
to thee, O Blessed Jesu :
After so sweet and comfor-
table a Promise of Rest and
Ease to each contrite, wounded, afflicted
Penitent, who would not learn of thee,
great Lover of Souls, whose Life was one
continued, bright, and glorious Example?
Ex-

Example is allow'd to be a most prevalent and engaging Motive. It is natural for us to fall in with the Humours and Practices of those with whom we frequently converse, and are intimately acquainted.

By wicked Company, how easily, how almost insensibly are we drawn aside to Sin and Folly? And tho' through the Propensity of our Nature, leading us another Way, we do not so visibly, so immediately manifest the Fruits of a religious Conversation; yet are not these found highly serviceable in promoting Religion and Vertue? Do not they leave a sensible Influence behind, and tincture our Minds with good Dispositions and holy Thoughts?

So for the same Reason as *living* Examples affect us, we are prone likewise to be much wrought upon by the Remembrance and History of those that are *dead*. Especially when they happen to be recommended by some peculiar Relation to us, and were extraordinary and eminent, either upon account of Success in laudable and heroick Enterprizes, or upon account of their Magnanimity in attempting them.

If the Persons be near to us by Blood, as if they be of the same Country or Family;



mily ; or by Profession, as if they be of the same Business and Calling, or of the same Sentiments in Religion : But particularly, if they be the *Leaders* of that Sect in Religion, whereto we adhere : These are such material Circumstances, as have generally greatest *Force* and Sway over us.

Children, unaccountably tread in the very Steps of their Parents, and the common People are observ'd, usually to write after the Copy, and in their Station, to imitate the Manners and Deportment of their Superiours.

The ancient Philosophers were divided into several Sects, and took their Names from the first or most Eminent of those, who had the like Opinion of Things with themselves. And they made it their principal Concern to pick up carefully, what little Fragments they could find of Precepts and Exhortations, written by Him whose Name they bore : In all Things, they propos'd Him as their Original, and counted it their chief Glory and Happiness, to come as near Him as they could.

The *Platonists* ; What great Veneration had they for their much admired, and most celebrated Master *Plato* ? but not greater than the *Pythagoreans* had for *Pythago-*

N
ras,

ras, or the *Epicureans* for *Epicurus*, their respective Founders.

Indeed there seems in Nature, a plain Reason why such Examples as these should be more insinuating and efficacious, because they are convey'd to us with the Advantage of an honourable Opinion, and stand distinguish'd by the Marks of great Authority.

Wherefore, upon good Grounds it is, that the greatest Example the World ever had, that of the most blessed and adorable *Jesus*, does in this Place exhort all Christians to learn of him. And sure it well becomes those who are called by his venerable Name, to shew how worthy they are of that sublime Character, by imitating his bright Example.

It is contrary to all the Rules and Usages of Men, not to conform our Actions, and even our Judgments to those, whose Disciples and Profelytes we pretend to be.

A Christian that does not endeavour in tolerable Proportion, and with due Allowance to follow Christ, is utterly unworthy, and in true speaking, altogether incapable of the Title he takes upon him, it being our Agreement and Resemblance of Christ, that is the proper Standard and Test of Christianity.

He

He who has nothing of *that* Resemblance to shew, can no more be called a Christian, than he who holds the Tenets of *one* side, can be said nevertheless to be of *another*, quite contrary, and truly opposite to it.

And nothing, I'm perswaded, would tend more to establish and confirm our Faith, or to increase and add Lustre to our Vertues, than having always in our Eyes, the blessed Pattern that is here proposed. Would we constantly make this Pattern our Guide, in all the intricate Mazes and obscure Passages of Life, we should be able to come off with Safety and Reputation in manifold Points, where now we fail, and are wretchedly mistaken.

The Precepts the Gospel afford, are very Pure and Holy ; but the great Example of our Saviour, in which those Precepts are so clearly legible, is that heavenly, that sublime Example, which will chiefly move us.

In speaking to the Words I have pitched upon, as proper for this Purpose, I intend,

I. To shew how far our blessed Saviour is imitable by us.



Practical Discourse of

II. I shall next produce some few Instances, in which our Saviour was above our Imitation. This, however, is not sufficient to hinder us from imitating him, as far as we are able. And therefore, in the

III. And last Place, I shall shew how very reasonable a Precept, and how kind and gracious a Request *this* of our Saviour is, that we learn of him.

First, I am to shew how far our Saviour is imitable by us. There are innumerable Instances to evidence this, according to the different Capacities in which he acted.

With Relation to his *heavenly* Father ; he executed his Will to the utmost, without shrinking back. It was his constant Care to discharge the Business and Office committed to him, altho' it was attended with most apparent Difficulties, and led on to the greatest Dangers.

With regard to his *reputed earthly Father*, and his *real Mother*, he lived all along in humble Obedience and due Subjection to them, being not ashamed of the Meanness and Poverty of their low Condition.

And as to *all other* Persons, he was the most complete Example of courteous
Affa-

Affability, and frank Readiness to serve his Friends, and of generous extensive Goodness to forgive, and assist, pity and pray for his Enemies.

Then, if we consider him with regard to the Duties that belong to the Conduct and Management of *himself*, tho' he met with continual Affronts and Injuries, enough to discompose and shock the firmest Vertue, and stoutest Bravery; yet nothing, we find, could provoke his Anger.

He was all Patience, Meekness, and Resignation, like a Sheep, that before his Shearers is dumb, so opened he not his Mouth, nor vented any Words that might betray his want of Temper.

He left no room for Idleness, but was perpetually taken up, and that not as some Men are, in impertinent or wicked Projects, but in doing Good. Either in healing the noisom, painful Diseases of the Body, or curing the almost incurable Maladies of Prejudice, and Stupidity in the Mind.

He shew'd no effeminate Luxury, no Tenderness, no Indulgence to himself; His Body and Soul were both of them employ'd in prosecuting the noble Designs upon which he was sent, and from which, nothing could possibly divert him.

And now let us reflect a little, in all these several Instances, how we *may*, and *ought* to learn of our blessed Saviour, and imitate his Example.

First, Would we learn *our Duty towards God*, the Imitation of our holy Lord will teach us it in the highest, brightest Manner.

His Love was ardent and affectionate; his Obedience unfeigned and universal; his Trust and Confidence establish'd, beyond the Power of any Extremities to break in upon it. He submitted to the Dispensations of his heavenly Father, notwithstanding the seeming Harshness and Severity of them, and acquiesc'd intirely in the Sense of his Favour and good Will, even in his extremest Agonies in the Garden, and his painful, bitter Crucifixion on the shameful Cross.

He was, in a Word, devoted solely to the Service of God, and never at all swerved from the Way of his Commandments. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength.* This is a Precept, or Law to us, but was fulfilled exactly, and punctually fulfilled by *him*, whose every Thought; and every the minutest Action, was consecrated to the Love of God, and regulated by it.

Our

Our blessed Saviour kept his Mind disengaged from worldly Objects, and gave up all the Faculties, and Powers of his Soul, to be filled with the Admiration and Praise of our great Creator. He used the World without abusing it; he used it, but did not make himself a Slave to the Fashions of it, by placing his Affections on its Poms and Glories. His Heart he reserved as the Property of God, who only could satisfy the far extended and immortal Desires of it.

And *where* can we learn that important Duty of Love? *Where* can we? *where should* we learn this, but from Jesus our Lord, whose Life was one continu'd, one most exalted Lecture, concerning it?

From *his* way of conversing in the World, we may be inform'd how *we*, our selves, ought to live in it, so as to avoid the Pollutions through Lust, with which it so much abounds. We are to look upon him passing through the World, as a Pilgrim and Stranger, with his Desires, Affections, and Endeavours, tending to the other better World, infinitely more valuable.

And in conformity to this Pattern, set us by our dear Redeemer; it must be our utmost Care and Study, to behave and carry our selves towards the present World,

Practical Discourse of

with the peculiar Coyneſs and Indifferency of Strangers, who are not long to enjoy the Pleaſures of it; with that generous Contempt, and becoming Diſdain of thoſe who aſpire after more durable, more ſubſtantial Enjoyments than theſe.

By this wiſe and prudent Method, by thus piously imitating our holy Lord, we ſhall perceive our Hearts and Affections to grow more looſe to all ſublunary Things, and more intent and fixed upon the nobler Satisfaction, and glorious Rewards in the Regions above. When we too paſſionately covet, or too fondly purſue the good Things of this Life; this is a proper Season to place in our View the Pattern of him, who was content with ſo ſmall a Share of them, and paſſ'd the Time of his Sojourning here, without the ambitious Deſire of a larger Portion.

But becauſe the moſt paſſionate Love is often a meer Flaſh, not enduring and fruitful, we are next to reflect upon the unfeigned univerſal Obedience, which it produced in our Lord and Maſter. This, ſays St. John, *is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments*, 1 John 5. 3. And our Lord himſelf, St. John 14. 15. makes our keeping his Commandments the only ſure Proof of our ſincerely loving him. *If ye love me, keep my Commandments.*

ments. And again, ver. 21. He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. Discourse VI.

That Love only is real and unfeign'd, that causes us to amend and reform our Lives. In Proportion as our Love is, so will our Obedience be ; the consummate Love of our Saviour was illustrated by his consummate and intire Obedience.

Hence we may learn by what Standard to judge of our Love, and discern the Truth of it, not by Pretence and Noise, not by Outside and Appearance ; but by the Efficacy and Operation, by the Fruits, that are gathered from, and the Works that are performed by Virtue of it.

Did the Son of God so punctually, so constantly accomplish the Will of his Father? and was this the Result of the Love he bore to him? we, if we would be Followers of him, as dear Children, must insist upon our obeying his Commands, and observing his Statutes as the proper necessary Result of our loving him. What comes short of Obedience and Holiness, is not the Effect of Love, is not the genuine Product of that heavenly Seed.

The Love of our Lord was so great, that he professes openly, *my Meat is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his*

Discourse VI. *his Work, St. John 4. 34.* his whole Concern was to discharge faithfully, the Trust which his Father had given into his Hands; this administred greater Satisfaction to him than even his necessary Food and Sustenance. Were *our* Love arrived to this Pitch, we should also esteem the Practice of Religion, and obeying the Will of God, who sent us into the World to serve him, as our main Employment and chief Concern.

The *unfinning* Obedience of the Lord Jesus, is matter of Emulation to us his Followers, who after all, cannot come up to, can come nothing near the Example he has shewn us.

That Example however, will direct us in all our Paths, provided we are so wise as to give due Attention to it. No surer Way of pronouncing the Sincerity of our Love, than by the Difficulties it overcomes, and the Dangers it successfully encounters. Of this we have plainest Evidence in the History of our blessed Saviour, who run all Hazards, and was exposed to the most terrible Dangers; yet did not for fear of these, sacrifice his Father's Honour, or prove false to that Covenant, struck, and solemnly ratified betwixt them. He out-braved the Malice and cruel Persecutions of his fiercest Adversaries,

versaries, and boldly ventur'd on the propagating of the Gospel, though he was assured of no better Return from the *Jews*, than ill Will and Hatred.

Oh ! what can more animate our Zeal ? what more enliven our Industry ? than the Prospect of our Redeemer, so patiently undergoing Shame and Contempt, bitter Revilings and perverse Cavils, and suffering, at last, most ignominious and tormenting Death ?

No human Punishment was so horrible, as to deter him from meeting it, whilst he was doing his Duty, and zealously promoting the Honour and Glory of God, his Father. And is not this a noble Relief, and brave Incouragement to us in like Manner, to be stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord, and to believe all the Dispensations of Heaven to be just and equitable, tho' we have no other Recompence for our Pains and Service, at present, but to be unkindly used, and maliciously traduced by the wicked of the World for them ?

Trust and Reliance on God's never failing Providence, even when he seems to be most forgetful of us, is a good Proof of a sincere Faith, and due Obedience, and we shall easily perceive the Example of our Saviour to have been very instructive,
very

Discourse very illustrious as to this Purpose.

VI.

The Weight of expiating our Sins, lay indeed extremely heavy upon him, which made him earnestly desire the bitter Cup might be removed from him; but the last Result of all, was, *nevertheless, O my Father, not my Will, but thine be done.* As though he had said, I am content, O heavenly Father, to drink off this bitter Draught, however reluctant and averse my human Nature be. It is thy allwise and holy Decree, I willingly and heartily acquiesce in the fulfilling of it.

Severe were the Conflicts he had with himself, and his Miseries numerous, and aggravated to the utmost; but nothing could possibly destroy, or so much as shake his firm Dependance on God. Still he acknowledged him, and laid the Strefs of all upon his gracious Goodness, and his unchangeable Integrity, not finally to forsake him.

Clouds and thick Darknes might hang about the Proceedings of God, and keep him as he was Man, from rightly understanding them. But then he was sure the Event and Connection of Things, would unravel the Mystery of them, and solve the appearing Contradictions and Irregularities with which they were obscured.

He

He expired in dolorous Tortures on the Cross; but not any of these inconceivable Tortures which effectually killed the Body, could so much as weaken or affect his Faith. He died in humble and devout Assurance of God's Mercy and Power, his whole Strength, Support, and Comfort was from him alone.

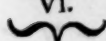
I can't but take notice of St. *John's* Narrative of the *Manner and Circumstances*, in which the Saviour of Men departed, St. John 19. 30. *When Jesus therefore had received the Vinegar, he said, It is finished, and he bowed his Head, and gave up the Ghost.*

Here's no Confusion, or Perplexity of Mind, no Complaint or Murmuring, as of one forlorn and destitute, abandon'd and hopeless; but the last Words he quietly and meekly utter'd, were only these, *IT IS FINISHED.* Now, even now my Enemies have done their worst, now my Calamities are at an End; now I have satisfied for the Sins of Mankind; now the Prophecies have received their final and glorious Completion; now thou, O my God and Father, hast finished and brought to an happy Conclusion the great Work of Man's Redemption.

This was the Sense of our Saviour's last dying Words, and when he had no longer
the

Discourse

VI.



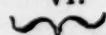
the Power of speaking, he bowed down his Head in Token of utmost Submission; or perhaps as an Act of solemn Adoration, and after this he gave up the Ghost, and his Soul was delivered from the Confinement of Flesh. So lived, so died the adorable Saviour of all Worlds, with full and wellgrounded Hopes, never despairing, never over much dejected.

Ought not we then to bear up cheerfully under all the forest Trials and Afflictions, since the very utmost that can befall us is infinitely more tolerable than what befall him? Yet he depended upon God's Wisdom, Power, and Goodness; and what? shall we cast away our Confidence, and be impatient and uneasy, and murmur at him?

Would we but look stedfastly to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is now appearing at God's right Hand, and continually interceding for us, little Disappointments and Misfortunes of this sorry World, could not so disturb and disorder our Minds.

That glorious Pattern is sufficient to direct us in all the Paths of our Duty both of Love and Obedience and Trust in God, and like a Light shining in dark Places, would

would secure us from the Snares and Precipices that lie in our Way. But,



Secondly, Our Saviour's Example is very proper for our Imitation *in Duties that relate to Men*, whether they be our Parents and Friends, or our Opposers and fatal Enemies. He lived in Obedience to the Virgin *Mary* his Mother, and *Joseph* his reputed Father, and did not disdain the ordinary Title of *Carpenter's Son*. The Meanness and Poverty of their Condition was not alledg'd to excuse his owning, or to justify his roughly treating of them.

St. *Luke* tells us, *He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them*, St. *Luke* 2. 51. Intimating no doubt, his yielding them such profound Respect and Honour, as is owing from a Son to the *Father* that *begat*, and the *Mother* that *bare* him.

All therefore with whom this Relation is not extinguished, should transcribe the Copy our Lord has wrote; they should learn from him to pay particular and distinguishing Honour to their Parents; to love their Persons, to cover their Infirmities, to succour and assist them in all their Wants, and to be ready upon all Occasions with their heartiest Wishes and best Endeavours.

It

It is not the low Station or bad Fortune of Parents that can discharge Children of their Obligations to obey them. For we see our Lord himself, who was higher in Dignity than the best of us can be, was not ashamed to acknowledge from whence he derived his Birth, nor disgusted at the Names they might give him upon that Account.

But let us observe likewise what was his Behaviour to other Men. His Relations and Friends tasted plentifully of his Liberality, and could ask no fitting Good but he instantly heard and answer'd them.

To his Friends he was most indearingly obliging; to his Enemies he was wonderfully generous and merciful, instructing us after his Example to do all Offices of Goodwill and Friendship to one another. That we do not demean our selves insolently to those that are below, nor ambitiously and enviously to such as are above us. That we harbour no spiteful or malicious, no hard-hearted or cruel Thoughts, but that we abound in tenderness and sweetness of Temper, in mutual Love and Sympathy; that we have a constant fellow-feeling with our miserable and afflicted Neighbours and Friends, and labour to give them Ease and Relief; and that we be ready to forgive, forbear, and pray for our bitterest Enemies,

Per-

Persecutors and Slanderers, like as *he* did for his very Murderers, pitying their Folly, and excusing their Ignorance, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*

These are the important holy Lessons, which our Saviour's whole Life teaches us, he went about doing Good, and never imagin'd, spake, or did the least Evil. His Treatment of the most bitter Enemies, is marvellously gracious, and deserves our Imitation. Why should we angrily resent the petty Injuries and slight Affronts that our Neighbours offer us, when the Son of God so mildly put up, and patiently forgave the vilest Indignities and most barbarous Usage? Certainly we should not grow stomachful at these, had we the Example of our meek and compassionate Master before our Eyes, who prayed for, and lov'd, and blessed, and even did good to them that spitefully hated, and persecuted, and even at last barbarously killed him. This august Example would certainly abate the Pride, and bring down the insufferable Arrogance of our vain Minds, which are so wretchedly puffed up and vastly swelled beyond their Size.

Thirdly, As to the Duties which regard the Conduct and Management of *ones self.* In these we are to learn of our dear Redeemer

Practical Discourse of

mer also, and walk in the Path he has with so great Honour and high Advantage, walked before us. His Passions were kept in due Order and within proper Bounds, and not suffered to run into those wild Extravagances which are too too visible, and too common amongst us.

What intervals of Time could be spared from the necessary Attendance on his Ministry in Publick, these he set apart for private and solitary Devotions, retiring frequently from the Multitude into a Mountain or desert Place to pray.

His manner of Praying was different from that of the boasting Pharisees. They prayed in the Corners of Streets, to be seen of Men, but he withdrew from the Observation of Men, that he might be nearer to and sooner heard of God. He was so far from indulging his sensual Appetites, that he severely curb'd and diligently check'd them by Austerities, and a continued Course of rigorous Discipline. He was purely chaste and nicely temperate in all his Pleasures, or rather he allowed himself no Pleasures at all, except what arose from the faithful Execution of his Father's Will.

Would we then learn the Art of managing our selves; Let us strive to imitate the Example Christ has set us; tho' but at an unequal, a remote Distance, let us strive to

to follow him. If our Passions begin to swell and bluster, let us immediately recollect, how calm and gentle he was amidst Provocations far more heinous.

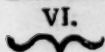
Discourse
VI.

Let his being constantly busy and well employ'd, teach us to avoid Idleness, or doing nothing, as the very Bane and Destruction of all Religion. What betwixt the necessary Business of our Calling, and the most commendable Assistance of our Friends, we may well enough be employ'd *abroad*, and our Devotions and Self-examination will sufficiently employ us *at home*.

Let us learn from him how highly requisite it is for us to allow proper Seasons for Retirement and Privacy. Let his Mortifications and religious Austerities influence us to keep a strict watch over our Appetites and Fancies so as not to be guilty of Softness and unworthy Compliance.

Thus I have as briefly as I could, represented to you the Usefulness and Necessity of imitating our blessed Saviour. I come now in the

Second Place, To produce some few Instances wherein he is above our Imitation. The Life of the holy Jesus being designed to shew us the Practicableness of his Precepts, and the sure Reward of stedfastly obeying them, was not attended in the common Course of it with any extraordinary supernatural Flights.



Practical Discourse of

It was highly necessary he should give sufficient Evidence of his Mission by Miracles, and by exerting sometimes, and on some suitable Occasions, the *Power* of the *Godhead*. Excepting Things of this kind, his whole History is wrote for our Imitation. For *our* Imitation I say, because tho' we cannot possibly go beyond, tho' we cannot equal the Original, yet it is our Duty to form our Lives and regulate our Actions as much as may be, by the Model he has drawn of them.

But in the peculiar Acts of the Deity, there we *may not*, we *must not* pretend, or hope to imitate him. As

First, We are not to imitate him in curing Diseases with a *Word* or a *Touch*. Some have invented wonderfully mysterious Methods of Relief from Sickness by Spells and Charms, and by other old Prescriptions, which have no natural Tendency, no accountable Operation; as if the Power of our Saviour in healing Distempers were communicated to *them*. This is a very great and dangerous mistake. Our Saviour does not by any means exhort us to learn of him what belonged only to him as God; in such Cases he is *above* our Imitation, and it argues great Presumption as well as Ignorance to offer to share with him in his incommunicable Properties.

Se-

Secondly, As we are not to imitate him in healing Diseases with a Word or a Touch, so we are not to imitate him moreover *in raising the Dead, and calling those that have been long dead, to Life again.* The great Author of our Salvation was over all God blessed for ever, and therefore it was fit he should demonstrate and establish his sovereign Authority. But we are to imitate him no farther than as he was Man. As *Man*, he accommodated himself to our Circumstances, and suited his Example to our Capacities. As *GOD*, he was vastly above us, both in his Nature, and in his Proceedings. We could not partake with him in the *Former*, and 'twas absurd, as well as impious, to imitate him in the *Latter*.

Thirdly, I observe, that even the *un-finning* Perfection of Christ, is *not* Matter of Imitation to us. He lived without committing the least Iniquity : And we may so far learn of him, as to use our best Endeavours against falling into Sin ; but we must not be dejected, or cast down, if our Infirmities have sometimes the Advantage.

For though our Lord lived without Sin, yet he does not expect that *we* should ; he knows *we* are *unable* to do the same. O let us not then be overwhelm'd with

exactly, and in *all* Points imitate the Example Christ has set us.

But let us employ our chiefest Care, how to make as near Approaches to him as we can. We have not the Power he had as God, of healing Diseases, and recalling the Dead. But we have the Power of bearing a comfortable and happy Resemblance to him, in the moral Dispositions and spiritual Graces, of which his Life afforded so many, and such illustrious Instances.

We cannot pass our Time without Sin *wholly*, but his having no Sin should teach us to be vigilant and industrious in avoiding, and (as far as the Frailties of corrupt Nature will permit) in totally extirpating it.

In the common Occurrences of human Affairs; nay, in the extraordinary and more surprizing Turns of them, the Imitation of our Lord will prove an excellent, an infallible Direction to us.

Be our Condition never so deplorable, and our Wants never so numerous, we may be inform'd by viewing the bright Example he has propos'd, how to extricate and disintangle our selves from the Uneasiness they bring upon us.

Are we in want either of spiritual or Discourse
temporal Blessings, we are from him instructed, to whom, and in what Manner
our Applications must be made? VI.

But then, if we venture beyond this in the Imitation of our blessed Saviour, if we look to work Miracles *our selves*, or give heed to the lying Deceits of *others*, we are passed the Bounds which we should have been stinted to, and do no longer imitate his Example, but blaspheme his Name, presumptuously assuming to our selves a Dignity, which we were never created to, and which we cannot manage.

A good Prince desires his Subjects should imitate him in vertuous and noble Enterprizes, but when they come once to incroach upon his Authority, and touch his Prerogative, this is counted bold and criminal.

We ought so to copy after the Pattern of our Saviour, as to acknowledge and revere his Person, as not to venture to imitate him where we ought not, or neglect to imitate him where we ought. Due Distance is to be observed, and there are other Uses to be made of the Miracles of our glorified Lord, than that of pretending to perform the like. They may, and were design'd to confirm our Faith, but were not design'd as Works which we might imitate.

Practical Discourse of

It is highly reasonable for him to propose the Course and religious Strictness of his Life to our Practice, because he has given us Ability to comply with his Desire, whereas no Ability is granted to us to do the Wonders that he did ; in *these*, therefore he can't be thought to oblige, or urge us to learn of him, but we may fairly expect to learn every Thing that is necessary to our Happiness and Welfare, every Thing that is good and commendable, from him, in whom they all meet, as in their proper Centre, and shine with their proper Light and Brightness.

And in *this* Sense *alone*, and under *such Limitations* did our Lord propose himself, as our Guide and Pattern. And this brings me in the

Third and last Place, tho' very briefly, to shew *how just and reasonable a Precept, how gracious and kind an Exhortation this of our Lord and Saviour is, That we learn of him.*

The Precept is reasonable and just, HE being the Lord, the Head, the Glory of the Body ; *We* only the Members of it. And what can be more becoming than that the Members be conformable to the Head, and submit to be guided and govern'd by it?

How

How preposterous is it to see the Head moving one Way and the Members another? To see Confusion and Variance, Strife and Enmities amongst those whose Ends and Hopes are entirely the same?

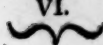
Just so preposterous it is, or, if possible, far more preposterous to observe the Life of Christ, all Holiness and Love, all Humility and Meekness, all Faith, Devotion, and Self-denial, whilst the Life of his Disciples, and Followers, is all Pride and Haughtiness, all Bitterness and Contention, all Luxury and Indevotion; in short, all of quite another Strain. To observe him constantly devoted to the Service of God, whilst we so shamefully, and yet so habitually turn our Backs upon it.

As we belong to the Body, it is fit we should be ordered and directed by him who presides and governs it. If Christ be consider'd as General and Commander in the War, we as Soldiers fighting under his Banner, still reasonable it will appear, that we learn of Him, that we imitate his Bravery in attacking, his Firmness and Conduct in vanquishing our Enemies.

His Enemies, and *ours* are the same. Though they acted with *more Fierceness*, and perhaps with *more Power* against *him*; yet they continue their Endeavours and Stratagems against us. And we,
if

Discourse

VI.



if we strictly mind the Orders, and carefully pursue the Measures he has taken, shall most effectually conquer them. But if like unfaithful disobedient Soldiers, we straggle and divide, and will be under no Command, the Conclusion will be this infallibly, we shall be made an easy Prey to our devouring Adversaries, who will quickly destroy and ruin us.

Christ is our victorious Prince and General, our Captain, our Leader and Guide, all which Terms import that he has gone every Step before us, and thereby marked out our way in the Christian Warfare for us. Let us then bravely follow him. Let us zealously press forward to signalize our selves in the Battle, and Cause of the Lord of Hosts, in that bloody Battle, that glorious Cause, which himself so successfully fought, and in which he so manfully suffer'd before us. For shame let us not retreat, when the King of Glory leads on the Way.

But the Exhortation of our Lord, that we learn of him, is as kind and gracious as the Precept is just and reasonable. O what can be more loving and tender hearted, more obliging and compassionate, than to beseech us all to be kind and good natur'd to our selves? That we would share with him, not in the Bitterness of that hor-

horrible Cup, in which he drank off the very utmost Dregs of the Wrath of God, but in the sweet and easy, the charming, graceful, profitable saving Vertues of the Christian Life, in believing, doing and suffering all those Things for his sake, in whom our chief Felicity consists?

Had our Lord appointed us some laborious painful Work, that would not at all redound to *ours*, but merely to *his* Advantage, this might have made us fearful and uneasy, jealous and desponding. But now, when we are both commanded and intreated to learn nothing but what we shall be for ever miserable if we do not learn: Now, I say, we may be soon convinced of his great good Will, and tenderest Love and Pity, and can have no Pretences to justify or excuse our Delay.

Come unto me, says the holy Jesus, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me. Learn of me!* O kind, O sweet, O most indulgent and gracious Request of the Lord of Life, and King of Glory. Is *this* the easy Yoke? Is *this* the light Burden we are to take upon us? Welcome all in the Name of God, and through Christ Jesus, who strengthens us. O how mild and gentle it is? how far from oppressing or grieving us?

Practical Discourse of

us? Dearest Jesu, how admirably contrived, how wisely appointed? how lovingly express'd, to bring inconceivable Joy, and lasting Happiness, and Tranquility to us?

Be we all perswaded then in Consequence of what has been said, to learn of Christ, and to follow each particular Step of his, as far as in our Power, and then we shall instantly so regulate our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and indeed, so order our whole Deportment, as in some competent Time, to arrive to great Perfection.

Never, indeed, *never* can we be able to live perfectly spotless, and unstain'd, but we shall avoid many Sins, and possess and practise many Vertues, to which, for want of imitating our blessed Saviour, we are such utter Strangers.

Let me then most humbly beseech you all to comply with this so equitable a Precept, and so kind an Exhortation; and I'm willing to believe, there's no Occasion for me to say more in a Matter so plain and evident, of the Usefulness and Necessity of which, you cannot, I dare say, remain insensible.

Wherefore I add only, this one most affectionate and fervent Wish: O that there were such an Heart in you, and in me, and in all Christians, of what De-
no-

nomination or Perswasion soever, that we would constantly tread in the Steps, and faithfully follow the Example of our blessed Saviour in this World, that we may be admitted to live, and reign, and rejoyce for ever with him in the World to come.

Almighty God, who hast given thy only Son to be made unto us, both a Sacrifice for Sin, and also an Ensample of godly Life. Give us Grace, that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable Benefit; and also daily endeavour our selves to follow the blessed Steps of his most holy Life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the eternal Spirit, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

P R A C -

us? Dearest Jesu, how admirably contrived, how wisely appointed? how lovingly express'd, to bring inconceivable Joy, and lasting Happiness, and Tranquillity to us?

Be we all perswaded then in Consequence of what has been said, to learn of Christ, and to follow each particular Step of his, as far as in our Power, and then we shall instantly so regulate our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and indeed, so order our whole Deportment, as in some competent Time, to arrive to great Perfection.

Never, indeed, *never* can we be able to live perfectly spotless, and unstain'd, but we shall avoid many Sins, and possess and practise many Vertues, to which, for want of imitating our blessed Saviour, we are such utter Strangers.

Let me then most humbly beseech you all to comply with this so equitable a Precept, and so kind an Exhortation; and I'm willing to believe, there's no Occasion for me to say more in a Matter so plain and evident, of the Usefulness and Necessity of which, you cannot, I dare say, remain insensible.

Wherefore I add only, this one most affectionate and fervent Wish: O that there were such an Heart in you, and in me, and in all Christians, of what De-

nomination or Perswasion soever, that we would constantly tread in the Steps, and faithfully follow the Example of our blessed Saviour in this World, that we may be admitted to live, and reign, and rejoyce for ever with him in the World to come.

Almighty God, who hast given thy only Son to be made unto us, both a Sacrifice for Sin, and also an Ensample of godly Life. Give us Grace, that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable Benefit; and also daily endeavour our selves to follow the blessed Steps of his most holy Life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the eternal Spirit, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Discourse
VI.

P R A C -

1000



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
ON
Christ's Passion.

*Seventh Discourse for Palm-Sunday,
or the Sunday next before EASTER.*



ACTS 2. 37.

*Now when they heard this, they were
pricked in their Hearts, and said unto
Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles,
Men and Brethren, what shall we do?*



HIS Chapter affords one of the most remarkable Instances of God's Mercy, in making Sinners sensible of their great Wickedness, that we meet with in the whole Bible, which will eminently appear by considering the Nature

Discourse
VII.

Discourse *Nature of the Crime, and the Quality of*
 VII. *the Persons.*

The *Crime* was the greatest that ever had been committed since the Creation, that is, the crucifying of the Messiah, with all those previous Acts of utmost Cruelty that had been exercised upon him, during his Abode amongst them. All these are highly aggravated by our Saviour's Innocence, that left no Manner of Pretence for such severe Usage.

As for the *Persons*, they were his peculiar chosen People, whom he came down from Heaven on purpose to rescue from the insupportable Bondage of Sin and Satan.

And one might imagine, that when God sent his only Son upon so propitious, so important a Message; when he sent him too, to his own, to his covenanted Servants the *Jews*, who had all along the Types and Prophecies in their Possession: — One might imagine, I say, that the Messenger in these Circumstances should have met with a kind Reception and hearty Welcome.

But instead of this, he is treated after so contemptuous and scornful, so malicious and base a Manner, that I question, whether all the Ages before could produce the like

It

It would be too tedious to instance in Particulars, and the Evangelical History is full of them, only one Thing I must take Notice of, that they persisted to the last, and the whole Multitude cryed aloud, *his Blood be on us, and on our Children*, St. *Mat.* 27. 25. They were indeed by the just Judgment of God upon them, given up to a reprobate Sense, and were harden'd to the last Degree in their Infidelity; so that those whom one might expect to be Fellow-workers with the Apostles, and Furtherers of the Gospel, are to both the most implacable, and most furious Enemies.

Upon the Descent of the holy Ghost, on the Day of *Pentecost*, whereby (as we read at the Beginning of this Chapter) they were enabled to speak all Tongues, some of the *Jews* mocked, and said, *These Men are full of new Wine*, v. 13. Wherefore *Peter* standing up with the *Eleven*, lift up his Voice, and said what is set down from the *fourteenth* Verse, to the *Text*.

The Substance of his Speech was to declare unto them, that *that Jesus*, whom they had lately crucified, was verily the promised Messiah, and now alive in Heaven; which St. *Peter* represented in such pathetick Strains, that *when they heard*

P

it,

Discourse *it, they were pricked in their Hearts.*
VII.



They who had before maliciously persecuted and tormented his Person, and since had reviled and hated his Memory; they who had shew'd themselves Proof against the Doctrine and Miracles of our Saviour, which converted ignorant Heathens; 'tis *they*, who *when they heard this*, were *pricked in their Heart*, that is, were sincerely and affectionately touch'd with the Sense of their gross Impieties, particularly of that which they are *here* charg'd with, the Crucifixion of the Son of God.

Afterwards we have the *Effect* of their being *so* touch'd; they said unto *Peter*, and to the rest of the Apostles, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* As if they had said, we are now deeply, heartily sensible of our heinous Sins, pray therefore direct us what Method we shall take to avoid the Punishment they deserve, *what shall we do?* A Sentence that betokens the utmost Concern, spoken with the most eager Vehemence, and demonstrates a real inward Conversion, founded upon a thorow View of the Odiousness of Sin, together with the Hopes of being delivered from it.

My Text being thus explain'd, has in it many Things considerable, but the main Point is this—— that *frequent and devout Medi-*

Meditation upon our Saviour's Passion and Death, is sufficient, with the Assistance of God's good Spirit, to produce in us a dislike and hatred of Sin, and Resolution of Amendment of Life.

Discourse
VII.

That *none* may be discouraged, the Example here proposed, is concerning the *Jews*, who, as has been shewn, were not only *Sinners*, but *obstinate, hardened Sinners*. If *they* could be wrought upon, why may not the *worst* of *us*? What convinc'd *them*, why should we think it may not as *effectually* convince *us*? Undoubtedly, if we hear the same divine Truths, with the same Attention and Sincerity, *we* as well as *they* shall be prick'd in our *Hearts*, and shall be as earnestly solicitous about our future and eternal Salvation.

In my farther Prosecution of these Words, I shall do these three Things.

- I. I shall explain what is meant by the being prick'd in Heart.
- II. I shall propose in brief, those particular Doctrines, upon the considering and hearing of which, our Hearts will, in all probability, be prick'd also.
- III. And lastly, I shall examine into the Effects and Consequences of being so.

it, they were pricked in their Hearts.



They who had before maliciously persecuted and tormented his Person, and since had reviled and hated his Memory; they who had shew'd themselves Proof against the Doctrine and Miracles of our Saviour, which converted ignorant Heathens; 'tis *they*, who *when they heard this*, were *pricked in their Heart*, that is, were sincerely and affectionately touch'd with the Sense of their gross Impieties, particularly of that which they are *here* charg'd with, the Crucifixion of the Son of God.

Afterwards we have the *Effect* of their being *so* touch'd; they said unto *Peter*, and to the rest of the Apostles, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* As if they had said, we are now deeply, heartily sensible of our heinous Sins, pray therefore direct us what Method we shall take to avoid the Punishment they deserve, *what shall we do?* A Sentence that betokens the utmost Concern, spoken with the most eager Vehemence, and demonstrates a real inward Conversion, founded upon a thorow View of the Odiousness of Sin, together with the Hopes of being delivered from it.

My Text being thus explain'd, has in it many Things considerable, but the main Point is this—— that *frequent and devout*
Medi-

Meditation upon our Saviour's Passion and Death, is sufficient, with the Assistance of God's good Spirit, to produce in us a dislike and hatred of Sin, and Resolution of Amendment of Life.

Discourse
VII.

That *none* may be discouraged, the Example here proposed, is concerning the *Jews*, who, as has been shewn, were not only *Sinners*, but *obstinate, hardened Sinners*. If *they* could be wrought upon, why may not the *worst of us*? What convinc'd *them*, why should we think it may not as *effectually convince us*? Undoubtedly, if we hear the same divine Truths, with the same Attention and Sincerity, *we* as well as *they* shall be *prick'd in our Hearts*, and shall be as earnestly solicitous about our future and eternal Salvation.

In my farther Prosecution of these Words, I shall do these three Things.

- I. I shall explain what is meant by the being prick'd in Heart.
- II. I shall propose in brief, those particular Doctrines, upon the considering and hearing of which, our Hearts will, in all probability, be prick'd also.
- III. And lastly, I shall examine into the Effects and Consequences of being so.



First, I must beg leave to premise something concerning the Sense and Interpretation of *being pricked in Heart*. Now *Heart* in Scripture, is used either for the *Understanding*, or the *Will*, or else for the *whole Powers of the Mind together*.

To each of these, I think we may safely apply this Phrase.

1st. A Man may be said to be prick'd in Heart, with regard to his *Understanding*, when it is clear'd and enlighten'd. The Darknes of the Mind excludes all Passages for Truth and Knowledge; but when once an Entrance is forced, then the Rays of Light are freely taken in, and the Mists of Ignorance and Error are scatter'd.

This is more especially observable in Case of extreme Unskilfulness, and Stupidity in Matters that relate to the Fundamentals of Religion; where it is our Duty and Interest to know, where nevertheless we are wretchedly dull, and carnal.

Such was the Condition of the *Jews*. They were nearly concern'd in the Belief of the Messiah, their eternal Happiness depended on it; they had moreover the fairest Opportunities; nay, I may say, they had the most irresistible Proofs that were ever offer'd, yet still their Understandings

derstandings were darken'd and unilluminated; still the Humility of his Appearance was a stumbling Block that puzzled and confounded them.

Those therefore of them, who were pricked in their Hearts at the preaching of St. Peter, had those Truths he taught made known and manifested to them. Perhaps they had frequently heard of them from *other* Hands, but their Prejudices kept them from being instructed and inform'd; *seeing they did not see, and hearing they did not understand.*

But now, at a Minutes warning, their Scruples and Objections vanish, and by the secret Operations of the holy Spirit, they have a *clear* and *distinct* Idea of what hitherto they could by no Means apprehend. I say, a *clear* and *distinct* Idea, not intending that they had a *full Comprehension* of the Mysteries the Apostle spake of, but only that they were so far let into their Reasonableness and Equity, as to yield a firm and rational Assent to them.

2dly. This being prick'd in Heart, may likewise be referr'd to the *Will*, and then it signifies, that whereas this Faculty had before usurp'd the Throne of Reason, and directed the Man by its sole Guidance and Authority, without respecting the Dictates of unbiass'd Thought, now on the

Discourse

VII.

contrary, it was intirely at the Command of Reason, and would not pretend to control or sway, but purely to submit and be govern'd by it. Or else it may signify with a more immediate Respect to Practice, that now the Will was resolutely determined to forsake Sin, and to cultivate and embrace Vertue.

'Tis too foreign to discourse at large of the *Nature*, and *Properties*, and *Influence* of the *Will*; however intricate the Philosophy of these may be (as when we come to search deep, every Thing almost is intricate) thus far appears evident, that the *Will* is capable of being perverted, and obstinate, and when it is so, it naturally produces Sin and Folly, the correcting of which may be the Meaning of being prick'd in Heart.

So here in the Instance of the *Jews*, beyond all question, their Wills receiv'd some Alteration, and a very considerable one it must be, to effect that intire Conversion that we find succeeded it.

3dly, Heart is put for the whole Soul, with all its Powers and Faculties, including the Understanding, Will and Affections. And then being prick'd in Heart, will import the Amendment of all these, in Opposition to their accustom'd Hardness.

For

For we must take Notice, that a broken and contrite Heart signifies such a Sense and Feeling, such a Consciousness and Tenderness, as awing us from the Ways of Sin renders us acceptable in the Sight of God. As on the contrary, a reprobate harden'd Heart, is one that is not mov'd at all with the Sense of Sin, but continues without Reluctancy or Regret, in the Practice of it.

This I take to come up to the full Signification of the Text, if we add moreover, that this Compunction, with regard to the Soul, and each of the Faculties belonging to it, was in extraordinary Degrees, and uncommon Measures.

The Understanding was thoroughly convinc'd and enlightn'd; the Will miraculously rectified, and the Affections were wonderfully exalted; so that *this* being prick'd in Heart, denotes an entire Renovation, a constant, settled change of Heart, and Soul, and Life, as will be shewn under the *third* Head, when we come to consider *the Effects* of it. — Let us now go on to the

Second General Head, which was to take a brief Survey of those particular Doctrines, upon the hearing and meditating whereof, our Hearts may, in all likelihood, be thus prick'd. When they heard

this, they were prick'd in their Hearts, says the Text, that is, when they heard what St. Peter had deliver'd to them, respecting either his *last* Words in the Verse preceding, or his *whole* Sermon. He concluded with appealing solemnly to the *Jews*,
 —-*Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

This might perhaps move them to reflect, that he whom they had lately put to Death, was *since* released from the *Power* of the Grave, and in a Condition to punish them; tho' I rather conceive, we ought to ascribe *this* mighty Work to the *Series* of the Apostles reasoning with them, which consists of two Things besides.

1st. His clearing himself and his Brethren from the vile Imputation of being drunk with new Wine, and alledging the Prophet *Joel*, for the Truth of what he said.

2^{dly}. His Proof of the Resurrection of our blessed Saviour, from *David's* Prophecy concerning him, which he *there* shews *not to be fulfilled*, but only by the living of our Lord again.

The Force of the Argument may be thus expressed in few Words. You mistake in imagining that we are drunk;
 No;

No; but now our Redeemer whom ye crucified is risen, and being placed at the right Hand of God in Heaven, according to *David's* Prediction, he has bestowed those Gifts upon us his Servants, which he had promised by *Joel* his appointed Messenger.

This was that which even the *Jews*, those wretched Infidels and hardned Offenders, were moved with; and we may thence be informed of *Motives*, that 'tis to be hoped, will teach *us too*.

It may be thought that the Crucifying of our dear Redeemer, might *more particularly* concern the *Actors* in that dismal Tragedy, and *so* the Argument was *ad hominem*, not extending with the *same* Force and Efficacy to *us*. But we are to remember, that all he underwent was the Consequence of *our* Wickedness, and therefore that *we* as well as *they* are to be reputed *his* Murderers. Then methinks *we* as well as *they* should be pricked in *our* Hearts, should be deeply moved and fully sensible of our Sins. For alas! These were properly his Executioners; these caused him to quit the Bosom of his Father, and in a State of Exinanition to die a Sacrifice for us, that he might save us from Hell-flames, and from the Vengeance of Heaven. As the *Jews* called to Mind with Sorrow and Re-

Remorse *their* Parts, so ought *we* when we read of the Crucifixion, to consider *ours*.

This will be made more effectual, if we recollect likewise his Resurrection and Glorification, which were the *other* Topicks insisted on by the Apostle.

Our Saviour's Resurrection is a convincing Evidence that his Death was satisfactory to the Demands of Divine Justice, it shews that the Father accepted our Atonement, because he released him.

And what can *better* encourage us to Vertue and good Works, than that our Saviour is *alive* to reward them? what more powerfully discourage us from ill ones, than that *he* exists, who hates and abhors them?

As for his *Glorification*, he is exalted to the right Hand of God, there he sits in perpetual Peace, and Bliss, and Joy, and shall reign for ever with him. Oh! How ought this to revive our drooping Spirits? How ought it to animate, cheer and comfort us? That we have a kind, and compassionate high Priest, who has all Power both in Heaven and in Earth, and who is able to bestow all Good, and to avert all Evil from us. From *him* we may gain the Succours of God's gracious Spirit to carry us on with Vigour in our spiritual Warfare

against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. *He* being highly exalted, shed forth upon the Apostles those extraordinary Gifts which so surprized the rest of Mankind, and will not fail to grant sufficient Supplies to us who earnestly seek them at his Hands.

These are the Considerations which wrought so wonderfully upon the *Jews*; the hearing of Christ crucified, together with his Resurrection and Exaltation, was what touched them to the very Quick.

I have gone over them briefly, avoiding Prolixity in so plain a Matter; and nothing can well be more known than the Influence such Thoughts will have upon us.

They enlighten our Understanding, by shewing the happy Fruits of Vertue, and the Misery of Sin; they consequently ratify our Will, by breeding an *Esteem* for the *one*, and a *dislike* and *hatred* of the *other*; in a Word, they tend to the awakening of our Consciences, the softning of our Hearts, and disingaging our Affections from the Love of the World.

But it is impossible that *this* should ever be the *result* of them, unless we hear under somewhat the *like* Circumstances as the *Jews* in *this* Place did, which leads me to say a little of what was highly instrumental to their Conversion. The

Discourse
VII.

The Doctrines, tho' in themselves very forcible, yet *cannot* have any Effect but by the Hearer's Diligence and Attention, nor so neither, unless the most High God is pleased by his Holy Spirit to bless them to us. And *we* having *no Title* to *such* Blessing, except we earnestly beg it, are obliged in order to our being heartily dissuaded from a sinful course of Living, after long Continuance in it, in the *first* Place, to set ourselves seriously to consider the *Malignity* of *Sin*, and the *other* Points I just now mentioned. In the next Place we are most unfeignedly, and frequently to implore the divine Assistance, and humbly to beseech God Almighty by his Holy Spirit to *press* these Truths home upon our Minds, and to make them sink down into our Hearts. If we do this sincerely and fervently, we shall by Degrees be brought to a real inward Compunction, and shall from the bottom of our Souls, detest and abjure Sin, and love and practise Vertue.

For however, *our* Case may be the *same* with *those* in the Text in *other* Particulars, *here* they are widely different. It is not to be expected that an *habitual* harden'd Sinner shall be reclaim'd upon *once* hearing, or upon a *cursorry* single Examination of himself, but the Doctrines that he hears are to be deeply imprinted on his Mind,

by

by frequent Recollection and mature Thought.

We ought by no means to *depend* upon *this unpresidented* Example of Mens being pricked in their Hearts at the hearing of a single Discourse; which undoubtedly was occasioned by some extraordinary Conveyances of Divine Grace, and does not belong to us. The ordinary stated Rules of Conversion require serious intense Application of Mind, greatest Pains, and constant Industry.

As for what is related, that upon hearing they were made sensible of their sad Condition, this should produce in every one of us an high Esteem and Value for the Word preached.

No Body knows, but the Seed received may bring forth Fruit abundantly; all therefore should be forward and zealous to receive it; and that as well by devout and fervent Prayer, and frequent worthy receiving the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as by diligent reading and hearing the Word.

God's Spirit is as the Wind, it blows *where* and *when* it lists; it is our Duty to attend its Motions, which are frequently sudden; it lies upon us to seek in the regular appointed Means, lest peradventure otherwise we may never find.

Our

Discourse

VII.

Our Success will always bear proportion with our Endeavours; if *these* are sincere and constant, *that* will be great; but if *these* languish and fall off, *that* will do so too.

Would we then be touched with our Sins in the meaning that I have already given? Would we be touched to the pitch of these converted *Jews*, we must take care to be exceeding vigilant and attentive; often and seriously to revolve those principal Articles of the Christian Faith St. *Peter* preach'd upon. And that none of us may be deceived by imagining we are gone far enough, when really we have not, permit me in the.

Third Place, To discover to you the certain Effects and Consequences of being pricked in Heart. The Text imports, that as soon as ever the *Jews* were pricked in their Hearts, they said immediately to *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Whence I infer, if we are as thoroughly affected with our Sins as *they* were with *theirs*, we shall not be content to live a Day longer in them.

The asking of that important Question, *What shall we do?* plainly supposes that they were dissatisfied with what they had hitherto done, and that they perceived some other Course was to be taken, and that

that they could not be happy by living as before, but hop'd to become so now, provided those holy Persons would instruct them *how* and *what* to do.

Methinks I hear them thus addressing St. *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, Beloved Friends and Brethren, we are intirely convinced, from your Discourse of the Crucifixion and Glorification of the Son of God, that we are in the broad Way to Destruction: we are sadly sensible that our present Practices will prove highly prejudicial to us. Upon which Account we are fully purposed to renounce them, and have mighty Hopes from the Clemency and Exaltation of the Messiah (which now we yield an hearty Assent to) that our State is not desperate; be pleased therefore to grant us our humble Request, and instruct us what is the most proper and best Method of making our Peace with God; Oh! *What shall we do?* What Course shall we take to be reconciled with our Heavenly Father, and obtain Mercy from him?

Here we learn the Effects and Consequences of a sincere Conversion, which may be summ'd up in these Particulars, *viz.* a settled and confirmed Aversion from Sin. An earnest Resolution to practise Vertue. And an intire devoting our selves to God's Service.

The

Discourse
VII.

The first Effect of our being pricked in Heart, is a settled and confirmed Aversion from Sin. To be pricked at Heart, is to have all our Faculties discharge their proper Offices in relation to it. It imports (as has been observed) that we know our Faults, that we confess them, be sorry for them, and hate and abhor them; nay, if we remember what I farther observ'd as to the Degrees of Compunction, it will moreover import all this to have been done to Purpose, not in a slighty Manner; and then it will signify our Contrition to be sincere and hearty. And no doubt such a Measure of Contrition will produce in us an Aversion from Sin.

Could we perceive the horrid Odiousness and Deformity of transgressing wilfully, and for a long time together, God's holy Laws; Could we but paint Sin in its native Malignity and proper Colours, I dare say we should be amazed at the dreadful Spectacle, and reflect upon our past Errors with all imaginable Indignation, and detest and abhor them for the future.

'Tis for want of this right Information that we generally entertain a favourable Opinion of our Vices, and this is the Reason that we indulge and gratify our selves in them. Indeed an unprejudiced Man may by Meditation and Care get Knowledge

ledge enough of his Sins to breed in him a Dislike and utter Enmity to them.

This much he must perceive, that they detract from God's Honour and Glory, that they provoke him to Wrath and Indignation, and that they will, if unrepented of, and still continued in, bring him to eternal Misery. All which being deeply fix'd in his Memory, and enforced by the Influence of the Holy Spirit, must prove of mighty Efficacy, and tend to the creating in us an Aversion from Sin.

But this Aversion will little avail us, unless it be rooted and confirmed. We may have some transient Dislike, some sort of Antipathy to our former Vices, without ever purposing to leave them. For perhaps we may want Appetite or Convenience to practise some kinds of Sin, or perhaps we may begin to think that they are like to prove prejudicial to our worldly Interests, and for these Reasons we may not be so fond of them as we used to be. But alas, such Motives will by no Means be strong enough, but will rather prove our Contrition to be defective and insincere.

It is a mature, settled, confirmed Abhorrence of Iniquity that is the natural Result of our rightly viewing it. And one Way of distinguishing a real and confirmed

Q

Ab-

Discourse

VII.

Abhorrence from a temporary passionate one, is its being universal against all manne and degrees of Sin, and not levell'd only against this or that Act of it.

So the *Jews* here, had undoubtedly a general Remorse and true penitent Sorrow for all their past Enormities, without making any reserve of some that more than ordinarily pleased them. They entirely renounced and hated their Sins, from a deep Conviction of the Baseness and Pollution of them. Their Conviction was grounded upon the best Evidence, and would therefore last and remain by them, when all other Arguments failed. And this is the primary Effect of our being pricked at Heart, the finding in our selves an habitual Dislike, and a rational well-grounded Aversion from all Sin.

2dly. Another Effect is *a sincere and stedfast Resolution to practise Vertue*. This too is implied in the Question, *What shall we do?* And I may say, that *this* as well as the *former*, is to be estimated by its Extent and Motives.

As sincere Conversion produces a general Hatred of all kinds of Sin; as it is founded upon plain Demonstration of the Horror and ill Consequences of it; so likewise will it produce in us a Love and Admiration of all Sorts of Vertue, from a thorough Sense

Sense of its being acceptable to God, and beneficial to us ; whence we shall naturally be carried on to the most invincible Resolutions of living ever hereafter in the Practice of Piety.

But if on the other Hand, our Repentance and Compunction be only superficial, we may probably have some faint Inclinations to Religion ; we may make some indeterminate Purposes to forsake our Sins, without ever doing the Matter effectually, or executing our good Intentions. And so our whole Endeavours, whatever we may conceive of the Sincerity of them, will stand us in no stead.

This is the standing Rule whereby we are to judge ; That Conversion, tho' painful, and attended with Prayers, Fastings, Tears, and Alms, can never be such as is required of us, and by no means comes up to the Qualifications of this in the Text, unless it produces in us a real change of Life and Manners ; unless the Consequence of it is that we now love, practise, and delight in those Vertues and pious Offices which we before neglected and despised.

The Resolutions that are taken up from a thorough Conviction of Mind, are steady, firm Resolutions not made at all Adventures, never precipitate or rash. Accordingly we read at the 41st Verse of this

Chapter, that *they that gladly received the Word were baptized, and the same Day there were added unto them about three thousand Souls.*

It was no sudden pang of Devotion, which presently goes off again, but a fixed and durable Change, leading naturally to what I am farther to observe in the

3^d and last Place, As a more noble Consequence of being pricked in Heart, viz. *An intire devoting of our selves to the Service of God.*

This Godly Remorse and Compunction of Soul, which the Text directs us to speak of, does mainly regard our Practice; its chief Intent and Aim is to make us better Christians, to wean us from the Love of the World, and the Sins and Follies of it, and to fix our Thoughts and Affections on the Joys of Heaven.

Some have quite lost themselves, when they come to explain this, in Cant and Speculation. 'Tis to be feared of too many, that their Writings and Discourses are full of Conversion, whilst their Lives afford little Proof, hardly any Marks at all of it. There's a great deal of Difference betwixt *talking well* and *living well*, and we need not confound our weaker Brethren with tedious Descriptions and affected Terms, when the plainest and most infallible Test

lies

Christ's Passion.

229

Discourse
VII.

lies expos'd to the View of all Men.

It is a delusive pernicious Art to refer Men in this Case, to rolling or recumbency on Christ, and other such strained Metaphors, with which a sort of People, in our Nation, love to be distinguish'd. I say, it is extremely fallacious to depend on them, so as to neglect considering that which supplies fully the Place of them; whether we have really renounc'd our Sins, and made any Improvements in Vertue, and given up our selves to the Service of God; if our Conversion be sincere, our Lives and Conversations will shew it, and we shall become new Creatures. And till we can produce this Witness on our side, the rest will be of small Concern to us. O let this then be our Standard and Guide; let this be our grand Inquiry, and main Concern, and let there be no Scruples, no Delays admitted.

The *Jews*, I observe, did not adjourn the Debate till *another* Time; they did not say with *Felix*, *Go thy Way, I'll hear thee at a more convenient Season*. But they closed instantly with the Advice, and were baptized, without all Demur or Difficulty. So forcible, so irresistible is the good Spirit of God; so impossible is it to continue in a State of Sin, when we consider the extreme Danger of it; so impossible

Practical Discourse of

possible not to practise Vertue, when we are perswaded of its Charms and Beauty.

A thorow, hearty Conviction, will be able (and indeed, nothing besides is able) to answer all Objections, and overcome all our Prejudices, against a religious Course of Life. Would we but take the Pains to examine into our Condition, every Day, nay every Hour, each single Minute would seem intolerable, that we continued in any sinful Courses.

Thus it appears what the Effects will be of the great Duty in the Text, which join'd to the foregoing Heads, amounts, I think, to a sufficient Intimation of the Change that is recorded in this Chapter, and express'd by the Converts being prick'd in their Hearts.

This, I have shewn, imports Conviction in the Understanding, the Removal of all Prejudice from the Will, and the placing of the Affections on their proper Objects.

Next, I briefly represented to you, those Doctrines, that would, by God's good Blessing, produce this important Alteration, and they were the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Exaltation of the Son of God, and I added something about the Method of receiving them.

Thirdly

Christ's Passion.

231

Discourse

VII.

Thirdly and lastly, I have given you a more particular Account of the Nature of Conversion from the Effects which naturally attend it, when sincere and hearty, that is to say, a settled and rooted Aversion from Sin; an earnest and invincible Resolution to practise and persevere in a State of Vertue; and an humble and intire devoting our selves to God.

I must now beg leave for an Inference or two, by way of Application. And,

1st. We are inform'd from hence, that *true Repentance is always operative, and shews it self in Practice.* There are many Evasions, with which the Idle and Slothful excuse their leaving their Sins. But none can be more fatal, than that hypocritical Pretence of being sorry for it. They say they do not question, but their Sins will be forgiven, because they find themselves relent at the Commission of them. This, I confess, is a good Sign, and may be improved into sincere Repentance. But till it be so, we must not by any Means depend upon it, nor hope for Salvation by performing it.

It is a general Rule, and the safest Direction that can be given, to measure our Contrition by the Influence it has upon our Lives. For if a Man be in earnest concern'd upon Remembrance of his past

Q 4

Offences;

Offences; if he be affectionately, and at Heart, concern'd for them, I can't conceive, how he will ever submit to continue longer in them.

We naturally flee from, and avoid those Things which we hate; and therefore, our living in known Sins, is a certain Token that we do not hate them, and consequently, that our Sorrow for them was sincere, *that* only being so, which amends and corrects the Crimes we lament; whatever other Qualifications it may have, they will prove empty and ineffectual.

In vain do we flatter our selves with what has no regard to *Practice*. He is to be esteem'd the truest Penitent, who is the best Man; not he that *talks most* of Religion, but he that *lives most* like a Christian. There's no such Thing as a speculative Disciple of the HOLY JESUS. Those that follow him, must take up his Cross, and continually deny themselves. The more we experience our selves, to improve in this noble Art, so much juster Grounds have we to conclude our Repentance true and unfeigned. And those who conclude from any other Arguments, do it at their great Peril and Disadvantage.

2dly. We may observe likewise from what has been said, that *Despair is utterly*
incon-

inconsistent with true Repentance and Conversion. For we are to judge of these by Practice too. Where Mens wicked Actions are as numerous and deliberate as formerly, there the Men themselves are unquestionably as bad, notwithstanding some little Tricks and Artifices they have gotten to prevent their seeing it.

Now *Despair* excludes all Hopes of Pardon and Acceptance, and perswades us, that do what we will, it is absolutely impossible to recover. This puts a Stop to all our Endeavours, and renders us to the highest Degree, remiss and careless. So our Practice, instead of becoming more vertuous and upright, is, in Truth, abundantly worse, because we are deprived of all Prospect of Advantage, by taking no Care about it. The Sight of our Sins, tho' it ought to be deep, yet must not be carried so far as to leave us destitute of Hope and Succour.

The Convert *Jews* in the Text, doubtless, had a full Conviction of their great Iniquities; but they had also some comfortable Hopes of escaping the Vengeance they deserved; or else it would have been impertinent to enquire in so solicitous a Manner, what Method they should take to do it. And this was agreeable to the Motives St. *Peter* had urged upon them.

He

Practical Discourse of

He discoursed to them of the Crucifixion, and Death of Christ, in order to bring them to a thorow Sorrow for their Sins, and he told them likewise of his Exaltation, and the Happiness to be obtained by believing in him, in order to produce in them the comfortable Hopes of Mercy and Forgiveness. O let us, I beseech you, imitate this blessed Pattern, and after we have made our selves duly sensible of our former Guilt, which could only be expiated by the meritorious Sufferings and Death of Christ ; let us consider his Resurrection and Ascension, that were intended to assure us of Pardon and Remission of Sins.

3dly. And lastly, From hence we may collect *how irreconcilable an Enemy Presumption, that other more usual Extreme, is to this godly Sorrow and true Compunction of Soul.* Men are said to presume, when they trust overmuch to God's Mercy, when they imagine he will be *more* merciful than he has declared he will.

By the same Way, that *Despair* is highly criminal, *this* is so too ; for it is apparent, that all presumptuous Offenders go on at all Adventures, without reflecting on their Wickednesses, or being in the least sensible of their great Folly in committing them. These are the two dan-

dangerous Extremes; and Conversion is placed betwixt them. This implies that we are deeply offended at our Sins, and in Opposition to the presuming Sinner, that we do not look for Favour, whilst we continue in them. Moreover, it implies that as we do not expect Mercy in our vitious Courses, so we do not at all distrust our finding it in some others. This puts us upon the most eager Pursuit imaginable, and makes us cry out to the God of Heaven, beseeching him to pardon and forgive our past Offences, and to vouchsafe us the Grace of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to amend our Lives according to his Word. And He being a God of Truth, that very God, *who despiseth not the Sighing of a contrite Heart, nor the Desires of such as be sorrowful*; will infallibly grant us our humble Requests, and will give us such an abundant Portion of his heavenly Grace, that we may be renewed from our vain Conversation in the World, and wholly determin'd for the future, to serve and please him in Newness of Life; by which we may know assuredly, that our Repentance is sincere, and will be accepted of by God our righteous Judge.

I might here take Notice of many other Things in applying this Doctrine to particular

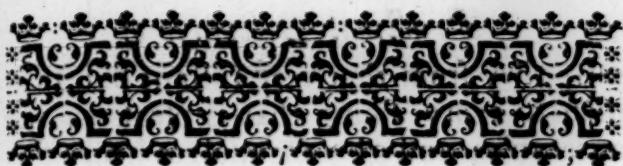
Discourse
VII.

particular Uses ; but I trust, what has been already deliver'd, may suffice to the Purposes of Reformation, and turning from our evil Ways, to God, after the Example of *the three Thousand*, who were pricked in their Hearts, upon the preaching of St. Peter.

If you put in Practice the Doctrines you hear from those that are the Apostles Successors, and *your Servants for Jesus sake*, as *they did those* they heard from St. Peter, you cannot but be pricked in your Hearts, and cannot but know what you should do, to cause in your selves, that *godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of*; for the obtaining of which, we cannot use a better, or more comprehensive Form of Prayer, than that which our Church has appointed to be daily repeated, during the Time of Lent.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hastest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the Sins of all them that are penitent ; create and make in us new and contrite Hearts, that we worthily lamenting our Sins, and acknowledging our Wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all Mercy, perfect Remission and Forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRACTI-

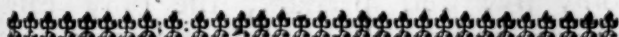


PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

ON

The Christian Religion an
easy Yoke and light Burden.

*Eighth Discourse for Monday before
EASTER.*



SE. MATT. 11. 30.

For my Yoke is easy and my Burden is light.



Nothing has had a more general, or more fatal Influence over the Minds of Men, than their conceiving the Practice of Religion to be attended with great, and insuperable Difficulties. They imagine that if they once consent to become virtuous,

Discourse
VIII.

Practical Discourse of
ous, they from that very Instant bid an adieu to every Thing that is pleasant, and agreeable; and give themselves hence-forward intirely up to severe and constant Labours.

It is upon a false Principle of Freedom and Pleasure, that Men usually proceed in the Choice of a wicked Life; their unreasonable Aversion from all manner of Restraint and Discipline, tho' highly profitable, urges them on to the Ways of Death, and the very Pit of Destruction, in quest of Ease and Liberty. Whereas would they but weigh Matters impartially, and not suffer their Appetites to sway their Judgments, they could not but evidently discern, that the Ways of Piety are the only free and pleasant, the only easy Ways, and the Ways of Immorality and Prophaneness, the hardest and most intolerable Servitude. This will appear from the following Instances.

First, By giving a just Account of the Easiness of Christ's Yoke, and the Lightness of his Burden, considered both in themselves, and in Relation to his gracious Helps and kind Assistances, which he is pleased to afford to all good Christians.

Secondly,

Secondly, By shewing the miserable Thralldom, and the heavy, the most uneasy Burden of a wicked State. From whence we shall naturally be led in the

Third Place, To reflect how great Encouragement our blessed Saviour has given, to such as are so wise as to hearken to him, when he invites them to take his easy Yoke and light Burden upon them.

First, *I am to give you a true Account of the Easiness of Christ's Yoke, and the Lightness of his Burden, in order to which I shall consider this Yoke and Burden, 1st. in themselves. And, 2dly. with Regard to the Helps and Assistances he is pleased graciously to afford to all good Christians.*

1st. The Yoke and Burden of Christ, looking no farther than *the Nature and Constitution of them*, are found to be *light and easy*. For are they not plainly designed for our Good? and are they not as plainly capable of effectually promoting it? And what can be more gentle? What so propitious as to require of us nothing but what it is our Interest to perform?

God commands us to worship him, but to what End? Not for *his* Profit, but purely for *our own*; not to increase *his*
Hap-

Happiness, which, as it admits of no Diminution or Decay, so it is *above* all possibility of having *Accessions* made to it. He commands us to love our Neighbours; a Thing very suitable to the compassionate and tender Dispositions he has implanted in us; and requisite to our Well-being, and even our Support in Society. He bids us be chaste, sober, and temperate, and not let loose our Passions, which are apt to start out into Exorbitance and Excess. This is all of it no other than laying the strictest Orders upon us, to be as happy, and act up as far to the Dignity of our rational Natures, as possibly we can.

Man being the Perfection and Glory of the Divine Workmanship, was created with Faculties more elevated, and for Purposes more noble than the rest of the Creation. He had higher Aims, and his Felicity required higher Attainments than belong'd to *them*. These Aims, and these Attainments are satisfy'd in the Purity of our Lives, and in conforming them to the Precepts Christ has laid down for the Regulation of them.

It is the Aim of rational Creatures to be guided and govern'd *wholly* by *Reason*: The Commands of the Gospel are founded on the surest, and most undeniable Reasons, and therefore our Obedience to those

Com-

Commands must be allow'd very reasonable. *We* having early and indelible Impressions of a future and immortal Life, what can be so fitting as to direct our Endeavours to it, and keep our Eyes fix'd constantly on it? *We* having better, and more generous Designs than the meer Gratification of our sensual Appetites, what can be more becoming than that we deny our Appetites, when those our principal Designs are hindred by complying with them? Upon these Arguments, the whole Scheme of the New Testament is to be accounted for, the whole being no more but directing us to the Fountain of all our Enjoyments, and teaching us how best to please him; which is unquestionably the final Issue, into which *all may* be, and *all ought* to be resolved.

As the Gospel suits well with the Aims of rational Creatures, so is it moreover the safest and wisest Method of attaining the Felicity they might expect from pursuing these Aims. The Felicity of a Rational Being cannot be said to consist in sensual Pleasures; these, 'tis true, are the Felicity of Brutes, and *they* may very consistently, very reasonably (if I may so speak) be earnest in their seeking after them, because they have no Ability of reaching further, and their Appetites are intirely at Rest here.

R

But

But *We* having the Honour and Advantage of more extensive Views, and being made susceptible of another, and superior Kind of Happiness, it is degrading our Nature, and offering Violence to the first Principles of it, not to proportion our Endeavours to the Strength, and Cravings of our Appetites, by taking such Methods as are proper to that Purpose.

And of all the Methods that were ever yet, or ever shall be invented, none so convenient, none so proper, as the stedfast and sincere Obedience to the Laws of Christ. This Obedience will produce in us, Peace and Tranquility of Mind, imperfect and incomplete in the present World, but surely to be established in the World to come. It will exalt and improve our Understandings, rectify and subdue our Wills, and place our Affections on those Objects which are most deserving of them. So it will tend to put us in Possession of that durable, and lasting Peace, wherein the Excellence and Happiness of our Nature is unquestionably placed.

The *Mind* of Man is too capacious to be filled with such Trifles as the World affords; and receives its chief Satisfaction and most sublime Entertainments from the serious Contemplation of, and frequent Intercourse *with* God.

The

The *Will* when embracing and loving him, and the *Affections* when respectively fixed upon him, are then in that Pitch, that regular and beautiful Frame, to which they are made capable of rising. Then they are in that Order and Harmony which is peculiar to Man, and a Glory that can be communicated to none on Earth besides him.

If the Commands of Christ be diligently considered, this we shall find to be the End and main Business of them, to direct us to that supreme, that only Good, the Author and beneficent Origin of all Happiness.

Thus he enjoins us to love the Lord our God with all our Heart; and O how easy? how delightful a Task must this be to Creatures, whom nothing but God alone can satisfy, and who are alone made fit for Communion with him, and the Fruition of his all-glorious Presence?

The same may be affirmed of all the *Duties* that relate to the *Worship*, and *Adoration* of him; they all centre in this, that they are admirably contrived to advance and confirm our truest Felicity, by supplying us with an Object adequate to the Desires of our Souls, and abundantly sufficient to gratify the highest Expectations of it.

Practical Discourse of

And since nothing but God alone is enough for these Purposes, we may conclude, that no other Thing, but Religion, no Religion, but that of our blessed Saviour's, is proper and suitable to the Talents with which we are endowed ; and the Religion of our Lord is (as I have endeavoured to prove) conducive to the utmost Extent, and brightest Acquisitions of those Talents.

There's one Precept or two in the New Testament, that seem at first View different from the others, and not so fitted to the Perfection of our Natures. The *first* is the Regulation of our very Thoughts and Imaginations ; and the *second* the forgiving our Enemies, tho' they have been never so much, never so often and long injurious. But I question not, we shall confess these to be light and easy, if it be remembered that wicked and impure Thoughts leave a Stain behind them, and prepare the Way to all manner of Enormities. And O what a shining Perfection is this, that *the Imaginations of our Hearts* are to be pure and holy ? No filthy, no polluted Ideas are to be lodged within us, and we are so far from being at Liberty to act Sin, that we are expected to avoid the *first* and *most remote* Approaches towards it ?

Then

Then as to *the Forgiveness of Enemies*, Discourse
this apparently promotes Love and Friend- VIII.
ship, and was judg'd by the *Heathens*
themselves to be heroick, brave and gene-
rous.

From the whole then, we may infer the Yoke of Christ to be gentle and easy, as it enjoins only such Things, in which the Excellency and Worth of humane Nature are principally to be seen. And would any Man count it an Hardship to be directed to the shortest and most speedy way of accomplishing his Designs? Instead of repining, has he not rather just Cause to be thankful for the Favour? So we ought to rejoice and be thankful for being under the Yoke of our Redeemer, and for the Instructions he has given in our Way to Happiness. So we ought to submit to the Laws, and Discipline of his Kingdom on Earth, as bringing us on to the Kingdom of Heaven.

But I must own *this* Account of our Religion regards properly Man in a State of *perfect Innocence and Integrity*. For in the present degenerate Condition of Mankind, tho' these Precepts make much for his Interest and Advantage, yet he is inclinable to go astray, and follow the wild Dictates of Opinion and Fancy, rather than the sound Advice of Reason. And

Practical Discourse of

the Foundation of this Mischief, is laid in the mighty Prevalence, and the almost irresistible Authority that our Senses have over us; these are what the Generality of the World are govern'd by; which is the Cause why we are apt to think those Courses of Life burdensom, that thwart our Appetites, and are managed by direct Opposition to them.

The Work of Religion and Obedience, is a profitable, and noble Work, agreeing well with the Dignity of our rational Nature; but for all that, it is at the same Time, a Work of Labour, and severe Trials, inasmuch as Reason is debased and overborn by Sense: Overborn so far, that without some peculiar Helps, it would be impossible to gain us to the Side of Vertue, notwithstanding the happy Rewards that will always attend them. *What these Helps are I come,*

2dly. To consider, and this will clear up the whole Matter. God's holy Spirit is known to be that Principle of spiritual Life, and Activity, from whence our Strength and intire Hopes are to be derived. By Virtue of this blessed Spirit it is, that we baffle the sly Suggestions, and malicious Insinuations of our degenerate Natures, and our great Adversary the Devil. Were our Nature upright and un-
byas'd,

byas'd, then we should readily embrace a Religion so every way agreeable, so exactly suitable to it; but now in the present State of Things, 'tis our lamentable Misfortune, that we are violently bent upon the pleasing, and soothing of our Senses, however pernicious, and fatal the Consequences may prove.

Now, as Things stand with us, we are obstinately averse from Vertue and Holiness, however great and certain the Rewards of them may be. So that had we been left destitute of all Succour from above, Obedience to the Gospel would have been a Yoke too heavy for us to bear. And as it is, there are Difficulties in our Way, which were thought enough by our Saviour, to merit the Title of *Yoke* and *Burden*.

But those Difficulties, by means of the manifold Assistances afforded to us, are rendered superable and easy: Because those Assistances, if heedfully minded, and carefully applied, will correct and amend the vitious Propensities of our Minds, and will in all Emergencies, and in every Exigence, be sufficient for us. Through the Supplies of Grace, which our Lord is ready to shower down in plentiful Manner, upon such as ask them at his Hands, through the

necessary and important Communications of that Grace, we shall be enabled to subdue the Enemies of our Souls, and Opposers of our Happiness. We shall be enabled to pay (though not complete and unfinning Obedience) to his holy Laws; yet what he is pleased graciously to accept of, instead of that, *sincere and hearty* Obedience to them, *without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy.*

He by his Spirit, controls and governs us, urging and inviting us to hearken to him. He by his Spirit, shews us the deform'd and odious Image of Sin, and by the same Spirit, he instructs us in the Loveliness and Charms of Vertue. And when Temptations grow violent, and threaten Dangers, his Spirit fortifies our Resolutions, and makes us *equal*, nay *superior* to them.

This surely is a mighty Advantage to the Yoke of Christ, that he himself gives us the Ability of submitting to it; he is no hard, or unreasonable Master, he expects no more, than he is sensible we can perform. That Constancy and Perseverance, which may be esteemed the chief Ingredients in the Burden, are so far from *adding* to the Weight, that they mightily *lessen it*, and in Time, and by Degrees, turn it into perfect Freedom, Delight and Plea-

Pleasure. Whatever Vertue he enjoins us to obtain, whatever Wickedness he commands us to avoid (as all Sins are to be avoided, and their contrary Vertues to be gained) still in all these, we have Help near at Hand, ready to relieve our sinking Courage, and to sustain our retreating Forces.

Discourse
VIII.

Would we therefore depend upon the propitious Helps, and kind Assistances of the Spirit of God, we should soon be brought to acknowledge the harshest of our Saviour's Precepts, mild and gentle; the heaviest of his Impositions, to be light and easy. For so undoubtedly they must needs be, where he has condescended to propose effectual Redress against the only Things that could lead us into other Apprehensions of them, I mean, the Frailties and Corruptions of fallen Nature.

But 2dly, Another Help is, *Christ has laid down in plain Terms, the Punishment of Sin, and the glorious Recompences of Vertue and Goodness.* He has told us the *one* is to be punished everlastingly, and the *other* shall be everlastingly rewarded. And *this*, certainly, is a very considerable Help.

How can we grudge to undergo some small Trouble, when we are assured it will make such advantageous Returns?

or

or how can we rest contented in giving loose to our unruly Appetites, for the Sake of *present Pleasure*, when we are expressly informed of the *deplorable irretrievable Issue?*

Many more Assistances might be mentioned, as egregious Proofs of the Easiness of the Christian's Bondage, and the Lightness of his Burden; but these Two shall suffice at present, that I may have Room to represent to you in length, the Advantage of them.

The plain Case is this. Our dear Redeemer commands us to take his Yoke, which imports *our constantly* obeying his Commandments, and subduing our unruly Lusts. A Task, 'tis confess'd, commendable and worthy, but the Depravity of our Nature is such, that we are perversly bent, and set against it, and are forcibly prompted to take quite different Measures. The resisting those vicious Inclinations, and untowardly Dispositions, creates us much Labour and Sorrow, and we should not of our own selves, be ever able to stem the Fury, and divert the Progress of them. Wherefore our Saviour has declared the dismal Effects of habitually indulging, and the happy Consequences of subduing them; and he has moreover given us the continual, and efficacious

In-

Influence of the Spirit, to further our Endeavours, and make them finally successful. our Discourse
VIII.

Thus he has wisely contrived to render his Yoke easy, and his Burden not grievous; in regard of the Precepts themselves, and their Tendency to our Good; and in regard also of the manifold Helps and Assistances of God's holy Spirit, and the repeated Manifestations of the Rewards of Vertue, and the Punishment of Vice. I come now,

2dly. To shew *the miserable Thralldom, the heavy, the most uneasy Burden of a wicked State.* A sinful Course of living, is so far from answering the gay Expectations of the deluded Sinner, that it is rather a State of the vilest Servitude. Sin is in it self very disagreeable to the Honour and Dignity, as well as the Quiet and Ease of our rational Nature. Sin consists in being govern'd by Sense, and hearkening to the absurdest Proposal of it, which detracts from the Character and Mark imprinted on us by God. It places us on a *Level*, at least, with the very Beasts that perish, and makes us more inexcusable, and more miserable than *they*.

If Ignominy, and Scandal be any Parts of Slavery, then we may soon determine concerning the wilful, and obdurate Sinner.

He

Discourse
VIII.

He basely betrays the honourable and high Station to which he was exalted, and is deservedly branded with the odious Appellation of an ungrateful, insensible Wretch. All the while a Man is sinning, he is all that while debasing, and stooping below himself, he acts beneath and unworthy of himself, he prefers Sense to Reason, the blind Instinct, and Impetus of ungovern'd Fancy, to the sober, and wise, the besetting, and noble Dictates of Thought and Recollection.

It argues an ungenerous and servile Spirit, *not* to keep up the Port, and Augustness of our Character. These are secured effectually, advanced most happily, by being religious, by submitting to the Authority, and Directions of our Saviour, who, acquainted with the Dignity of Man, and his proper Felicity, has adapted all his Precepts and Institutions to them. So that whilst we act in Conformity to them, we act as becomes rational Creatures, and pursue those Methods, that will carry us to our desired End.

Nothing of this is true, but the direct Reverse in Sinners. Sinners are false to the Post, and Charge, that Providence has committed to them. And which is more, they are false to their own selves, in pursuing such Maxims, and indulging
such

such Practices, as destroy all Peace and Quiet within. What is unnatural as Sin, cannot but be troublesome. Sin is therefore Sin, because it is contrary to our Natures, and against the Constitution of them.

Now it is utterly impossible to imagine, how a Man should commit such an Outrage upon himself, and not feel the Shock, and Terrors of it. Undoubtedly, we should sensibly feel these, were it not, that we are *since* the Fall, blind and senseless, in Comparison of what we were *before* it. However, we are not, as yet, so utterly stupid, and harden'd, as to be wholly void of Regret, and Disturbance from the Consciousness of our Sins.

Nor is the Trouble they create, to be imputed solely to the being against our Nature, but to those Apprehensions of Punishment, which inseparably attend them. He that commits Evil, can hardly be free from foreboding uneasy Thoughts, about the Issue, and Consequence of it. These fret and perplex a Man most unmercifully, haunting him from Place to Place, and never allowing him the least Respite.

Fear is a restless and importunate Guest, and where it happens upon weak Minds, or where the Grounds of it are just, there it administers perpetual Grief,
and

and Anguish, and makes a Man even weary of living, whilst he is deprived of all the Satisfaction of Life.

I confess, People may sin themselves into down-right Insensibility; but that is a Business of Labour, and long Use, and cannot be accomplish'd without continual Struggles. And yet, till it actually is accomplished, there is no Rest to the Wicked, no Freedom from the bitter Reproaches, and inexpressible Horrors of a guilty Breast.

Nay, what farther shews the Misery of Sinners is, that when they are grown Proficients in the Trade of Vice, harden'd and reprobate in the Commission of it, then is the Time, that they are nearest Destruction, and ripe for the Execution of Justice. So that look upon the wicked Man, in whatever Position you please, it must be confess'd, that in every Position, his Case is most Unfortunate, his Circumstances sadly miserable; he has always a Load and Oppression upon his Spirits, and is under the Dominion, and Power of Satan.

Sin causes great Uneasiness in the *Beginning*, as it is utterly unsuitable to our very Frame, and unworthy our Nature; as besides it argues the Violation of God's righteous Laws, so it fills and distracts the

the Mind with the melancholy Prospect, and dire Expectations of approaching Wrath.

If by constant Practice our Vices are become familiar and rooted; this is so far from Security and Health, that the Disease may be known thereby to be spread and incurable. On the contrary, the longer we have gone on in the Paths of Vertue, so much greater will the Pleasure of them be, and so much more certain, so much greater likewise the Reward allotted for them.

The chief Difficulties are in the *first Entrance*; and as our Appetites are tam'd, and our Affections refined, the Prejudices and Impediments will insensibly wear away.

The pure and holy Precepts of the Gospel will be relish'd by us, in Proportion, as we advance in true Wisdom and Knowledge; and in Proportion to the same Advances, Wickedness will lose Esteem, and be less apt to gain upon us. Slavery is a Thing that is not to be brooked with Ease, and cannot be submitted to willingly, unless Ignorance and vile Dejection have prepared the Passage.

This is the Servitude of Sin, in the very essential Make, and original Constitution of it. It is acting below our Sphere,
and

and offering Violence to the Designs and Tendency of human Nature: It breeds Confusion, and Disorder in our Minds, and at the best, is either extremely dangerous, when we do not feel it, or troublesome and vexatious to the last Degree, when we do.

And O what a wretched dastardly Man is he, who can be content to serve such cruel and tyrannical Powers? how still more cowardly, still more servile is that Man, who is pleased with his Condition, and hugs his Chains?

Fetters, though of Gold, are insupportable to the Brave; Liberty and Ease are to be prefer'd to any, to every Thing besides; no purchase of them is too dear, no Price too great for them. But why do I speak of the *Price*? The Sinner is so foolish, that he exchanges them for *that* which is *abundantly worse* than *nothing* at all, even for the Troubles and Agonies of a wicked Heart *here*, and for the easeless, endless Punishment of Wickedness *hereafter*. A Slave he is with a Witness, that is so for the sake of Slavery, without Obligation, and without Advantage. But it is fit that I hasten to some other visible Tokens of the Burden of a wicked Life. Let it then be observed in the

2d. Place, That Men, in that State, Discourse
VIII.
have different and opposite Purposes to pursue, one Vice enticing them violently this Way, and another urging them as forcibly that Way. So that betwixt innumerable variety of Commands and Interests, they must needs suffer very much.

Ambition and Pride, how do they push us forward to Expence, from which, how at the same Instant, does Covetousness restrain us? There is within the Tabernacle and Dwellings of Unrighteousness, Strife and Enmity, Hatred and Variance; so within the Souls of the sinful, nothing is to be met with, but endless and unintermittent Discord, by Means whereof, the Weight and Burden of their Yoke are prodigiously increased.

It is almost as impossible to serve Mammon, in all his various and unconcerted Projects, as it is to serve both God and Mammon. He is not more distant from God, than from himself; vastly remote, and contrary to God he is, but contradictory likewise, and inconsistent with himself. But supposing he was not so, and that he could satisfy the Demands of his Task-Masters; yet the Number of those Demands are so great, that it would be insupportable Drudgery to comply with them.

S

There



There are three kinds of Powers, to which the wicked Man is subject, the *Flesh*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and each of these is continually urging him to some hard, and unreasonable Work; so that he is never permitted to enjoy any Rest, but is always slaving and toiling for one or other of them. And it is strange to observe, what Fatigues and Difficulties they oblige him to undergo, more by far and greater than might be sufficient to gain him a Title to Happiness. Whereas all the Recompence he can expect from Sin, is, as the Apostle assures us, the Wages of it is, *viz. Death*, and that *Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal*.

Consider now the Easiness of Christ's Yoke, his Commands are uniform and agreeing, and design'd for our highest Interest, and we may have this Comfort in obeying them, that the *Event* and *Consequence* will be *prosperous*. Besides, there's Repose and Quietness to be enjoy'd in Hand, there's none of those tedious and sweating Labours; none of those disturbing and anxious Cares, which give a bitter and unpalatable Relish to the Chief of their Enjoyments.

3d. What still further adds to the Folly of the Sinner, is, that *he makes Choice of this burdensom and most intolerable Slavery,*
when

when it is in his Power to embrace the gentle and gracious, the easy and most propitious Yoke of our blessed Saviour. Necessity and Constraint, are Things that we cannot withstand; and if a Man, by meer Force, be reduc'd into Servitude; it is his Misfortune, not his Fault. But whilst a Man has the Means of Recovery freely offered him, whilst he is kindly invited, and earnestly desired to accept them: In these Circumstances to submit voluntarily to a Burden (the Weight whereof will fearfully sink us) I say, in these Circumstances, to submit to such Burdens, is the sure Token of a base and degenerate Disposition.

It is to be remembred too, that the Proceedings of Sinners are an high Affront to our Saviour, who has done and suffered so much for our sakes, they plainly shew, that we think our selves not at all beholden to him. We refuse the Benefits he intended to confer upon us, and own, that we chuse rather to serve our Enemies in their hardest, and most unmerciful Dispositions, than to serve our best Friend, and faithful Patron, in those Commands of his, which are suited to the true Ends, and proper Felicity of our Natures, and by careful Use of the Helps he has afforded, are render'd practicable, and in Comparison, easy to us.

A generous Neighbour seeing the Oppression we groan under, is at the Expence of Blood and Treasure to rescue us from Misery. Now how wretchedly base, and ingrateful should we appear to all the World, if we should prefer nevertheless our former Servitude, to that glorious Ease and Liberty which our worthy Protector has been providing for us? Would not every one think us undeserving of Assistance, that neglect the Advantages of it? This is exactly the Case of the Servants of Sin; they, under the Dominion of their Lusts, exposed to certain and inevitable Ruin, were in extreme and inexpressible Sorrow, groaning from the Sense of that heavy Weight which it was not in their Power to remove.

Then did the blessed Jesus out of a pure disinterested Principle of Love, in great Humility, condescend to visit and succour us. He came down from the Regions of Bliss and everlasting Glory, for no other Cause than this only, that he might rescue us from the merciless Hands, and lawless Usurpation of our bitter Enemies. Then it was, that he began to pity our Condition; then it was that he resolved, at any rate, to become our Ransom, and all he requires of us is, that we should accept of his Favours, and reap the inestimable

mable Benefits of his Death and Passi-
on. Discourse
VIII.

But they that refuse his Yoke, refuse likewise the Redemption he has purchased, and bid insolent Defiance to his Authority. They trample under Foot the Blood of Christ, accounting it as a vile and contemptible Thing. Certainly those Men are unworthy Deliverance, who return eagerly to their former Servitude, and despise the Honour, and neglect the Means of Rescue and Safety. Yet so we do who are content to live in the Thralldom and Slavery of our Iniquities; whilst we have the most inviting Opportunities, the most pressing Incouragements, to take upon us the mild and easy, the profitable and besitting Yoke of our blessed Saviour. For what greater Incouragement? What more forcible Motive can we have than that this Yoke is easy, and this Burden light?

I cannot make any so proper Application of the whole, as to urge and intreat you to obey the Call and Admonition of Christ our Saviour, in the Verse immediately preceding the Text, to take his Yoke upon us, and that for this very Reason, even because of the Ease and Lightness of those Injunctions which Christ our Saviour lays upon us.

O let us not be discouraged by the Title that Christ gives his Laws ; let us not be imposed upon by the fair and specious Promises of Satan. Let not the Devil's Insinuations of Pleasure in the Ways of Sin, be able to bring us under the Dominion and Bondage of it ; but let us remember he is the Father of Lies ; his accursed Kingdom and baneful Empire are supported by Forgery and impious Stratagems. He tells us the Method to true Happiness and Pleasure, lies through the Gratification of sensual Appetites, but miserable, yea for ever miserable are they, who are so unhappy as to believe him.

The present and transitory Satisfaction of Sin, are in themselves extremely insignificant, and set in Opposition to the deplorable Conclusion, it argues the last degree of Hardness and Stupidity, for the sake of them, to hazard our Souls to all Eternity. As we are not to hearken to the deluding and false Arts of the Tempter, so are we not to be discouraged, when our Lord stiles his Commandments a Yoke, for a Yoke tho', they be assuredly, that Yoke is easy ; a Burden indeed they are called, but that Burden is light, and may be born with *Patience*, and with *Pleasure*

O let us not then, I beseech you, for fear of the Pressure and insupportable Load of this Burden, of the Galling and Severity of this Yoke, be affrighted from our Obedience. But let us soberly recollect, that as Religion, being carried on in direct Contradiction to our Lusts, is attended with Pains and Difficulties, of which that Yoke and Burden are the Emblems; so there are infinite and solid Pleasures, durable and substantial Blessings to be met with, which make abundant Recompence for our Labours, and render all easy and delightful to us.

Why then are Men generally so pleased, so extremely pleased with a vicious Course of Living? With what Face can the Sinner pretend to boast of Freedom and Ease? and how unjustly does he charge Vertue with being troublesom and severe? To commit Iniquity and plead the Cause, and glory in the Commission of it, this is downright Prophaneness, and proceeds from a reprobate and hardned, a seared and absolutely senseless Heart.

But methinks the Considerations I have been urging, relating to the Easiness and Pleasures of the Christian Religion, which cannot be better illustrated than by the toilsom Weariness, and sore Oppression of going on in wicked Living, methinks

Practical Discourse of

those Considerations should prevail with us, to forsake instantly our Sins, and return to God, by taking upon us his Yoke, and by resolutely shaking off the Yoke that has so long perplexed and fretted us; and which if we still submit to, our Case may come at last to be utterly irretrievable.

It will for certain cost *some* Labour and Pains to get rid of Masters that have had so long, and such intire Possession. But get rid of them *we must*, or else we are undone; 'tis sure worth our while to be at a little Trouble, in order to avoid the Miseries, and Confusion of the second Death.

Besides, when the Conflict is once well commenc'd, the Ice once thoroughly broken, we shall soon perceive mighty Alterations. Piety will become a Delight and infinite Satisfaction to us; and we shall look with Detestation and Horror, upon that impure and unhallowed State wherein the rest of Mankind are content to dwell.

Take therefore this Yoke of Christ; take and hold fast for ever the Burden he is pleased to lay upon you. He is our God and Saviour; our most merciful and gracious Lord; our faithful Advocate and eternal Intercessor; he will not, he cannot possi-

possibly deal unkindly by us. So that we may depend upon it, if the Yoke were unnecessary, or even useless; he would not in such moving Words, in so affectionate a Manner, have pressed us to accept it. But since he does with all imaginable Earnestness, recommend it to us, we may conclude it is for our highest Advantage to take it on us.

Discourse
VIII.

Once more therefore I repeat the Words of our blessed Lord and holy Redeemer, *Take my Yoke upon you*, and let us with one Accord make answer; Thy light and easy, this gentle and gracious Yoke, O merciful Lord, we willingly, we chearfully put our Necks, and our whole Hearts, and Souls, and Bodies to it, most firmly believing, that the bearing of thy Yoke in this World, is the most effectual Way to be happy with thee, in the World to come. Which grant, O gracious God and heavenly Father, for thy dear Son's Sake, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Eternal Spirit be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

P R A C



P

T

N



W



T



PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

ON

The Duty of Thanksgiving
for God's Benefits.

*Ninth Discourse for Tuesday before
EASTER.*



PSAL. 116. 12.

*What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his
Benefits towards me?*

26



IN what particular Occasi-
on this Psalm was wrote,
is a Point not fully settled
by Expositors. However
the whole Frame declares,
that 'twas penn'd as a
Thanksgiving for some inestimable Bless-
ing,

Discourse
IX.

Discourse

IX.

ing, and probably (according to Bishop Patrick) for his Deliverance from the Conspiracy of *Absalom*, when *Ahitophel* and others proved false to him.

The Words I have read, as they signify a vehement Affection for Almighty God, and a confirmed Sense of his numerous Favours, may be very justly applyed to what the Author perhaps by a prophetic Spirit *secondarily* alluded to, in his utterance of them, the Benefits, the great and many Benefits that we receive through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I need not acquaint you of how great Necessity it is to all Christians, to have a right Notion of the noble Mystery of Man's Redemption. There are *some* Things too high for us, 'tis true, but *others* lie level to almost every Capacity, that will but receive, and meditate upon the holy Scriptures.

What strange Stupidity is it for us, to be taken up wholly with the Thoughts of *this* Life, without ever raising them to the Hopes, and Expectation of a *better*? How wretchedly blind and ignorant are those, who spend Nights, and Days, their choicest Hours, in vain Speculation, and never allow themselves to consider the more sublime and important Truths that Religion teaches? How preposterous is it
in

in Men that pretend to look for Salvation by a Saviour, that profess all Love and Honour for him, to neglect at the same Time the study of his Life, and pass whole Days and Weeks, nay several Years, in perfect Ignorance of what he has done and suffered for us?

I wish I could not carry this Representation further, but I'm afraid a little Observation may soon convince us, that many who make loud Claims to the Merits of our Saviour's Crucifixion, hardly bestow a serious Thought upon it, even when the dismal Story of his last Agonies is read in Publick.

How cold and unaffected are the generality of us, upon hearing of the barbarous Usage of the Mob and Soldiers towards him? Whereas we ought to have an habituated continual Sense of his Love and Kindness, which at the bare Mention, at each remote Glance, should kindle our Affections, and inflame and actuate our Devotions; instead of that, how dull and lifeless, how slow and heavy are we?

Now all this Deadness and Insensibility is to be intirely charged upon our own Negligence, and Inconsideration. The Benefits Christ has conferr'd upon us, his Love and Compassion, are so signally great, that 'tis impossible for us to believe without
loving,

Discourse loving, to think without admiring, or to
IX. remember without praising him.

Our Distemper therefore at the Bottom is want of Care and Thought; the Reason why we are not deeply moved, is because we do not rightly, or not at all consider. It is not for lack of Matter to excite our Thanks, not for lack of Favours to demand our Gratitude, but purely for lack of Wisdom to recollect his wonderful, and unheard of, and never to be parallel'd Condescension.

In order to obviate and increase our Sense of Christ's Love, and inform us aright of it, three Things seem especially requisite.

- I. That we understand what he has performed, to deliver sinful Man from the Curse of God, and restore him to the Divine Mercy.
- II. That we enquire what Obligations are laid upon us thereby.
- III. That we apply this, every Man to himself, and consider what is to be done on our Sides, to render us Partakers of the Advantages he has purchased.

'Tis the *second* of these that I propose to speak of, after having premised a Word or two on the *first*.
Now

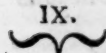
Now in order to understand what Christ has performed, to deliver sinful Man from the Curse of God, and restore him to the divine Mercy, we must consider the Condition we all are in by Nature, *without a Saviour.*

Man, in his fallen State, is liable to God's heavy Vengeance in this World, and in the World to come; he has incurr'd the Almighty's Displeasure for his *past* Offences, and can no way avoid transgressing for the *future.*

Our blessed Saviour, that he might redeem us from this distressed and miserable Condition, has purchased for us a new Covenant, a gracious benign Covenant, wherein is promised, Forgiveness of all our Iniquities, if we do but sincerely bewail them, and shew that we are heartily sorry, by endeavouring to resist all Occasions of them.

As our *King*, he destroy'd the Dominion of our three grand Adversaries, the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*. As our *Priest*, he offered himself a Sacrifice; and as our *Mediator*, he still makes Intercession for us. Add to these, that as a *Prophet*, he has revealed to us the whole Will of God, faithfully informed us what we ought to do, and what we ought not; what will damn, and what will save us.

More-



Moreover, he has sent us the holy Spirit to assist and comfort us, while we stay here below, and will assuredly receive us into the Mansions above, if we conscientiously obey and serve him.

Then let us reflect by *what Methods* he has done all this, and it was done at *his own* Expence, it cost him his exceeding precious Heart's Blood. The Victory obtain'd is no easy cheap one, but was won by the infinite Labours and Hardships of the Ever-blessed Jesus. This may suffice for the explaining the *former* of these Heads. I come now to the

2d. To enquire, *What Obligations are laid upon us thereby, what Returns we are to make to the Love and Beneficence of our dear Redeemer. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits towards me,* says the *Psalmist*, in the Text. He had been recounting in his Mind, the marvellous Kindness of God, how wonderfully his Providence had in all Emergencies, in all the Pressures and Distresses of exalted Frailty, succoured and protected him.

These his Deliverances, he finds so numerous and great, as much above his Expectation, and Desert, as they were above his Power, that he could not forbear crying out, *O what shall I render? what shall I give unto him? Is there any Thing*

Thing in me, O my God, that can please thee? Can I in any Measure demonstrate my Love, and Affection, for the vast Number of immerited Favours, thou hast out of meer Pity, conferred upon me?

And if the *Royal Pen-man's* Heart was so inflam'd upon the bare View of God's *temporal* Mercies, how ought *ours* to burn, when we consider his *spiritual* ones, especially when of all others, we have before our Eyes, that inestimable Proof of his Concern for our Welfare, the Salvation of our Souls, the rescuing those immortal Beings from eternal Flames, and placing them in everlasting Glory?

Sure then, we cannot but break forth into the pathetick Language of holy *David*, What shall I render unto thee, O my dearest Lord, for these unspeakable Instances of thy tender Compassion towards me? Ah! what indeed? what can poor frail sinful Man do for the Lord, the most mighty God? What can a degenerate depending Creature do, worthy of his supremely Great and unspotted Creator? Nothing doubtless, by way of Retribution; nothing proportionable to the Gifts we have received, nothing that will set us free from our Obligations to him.

Yet *our Incapacity* to pay off *all*, must by no Means excuse us from paying *any*;
T some-

Discourse

IX.

something we must be prepared to do for his sake, *many* Things are actually to be done.

We must be prepared to resign our Lives, all that is dear to us in this World, all that we esteem and value, whenever his Providence seems to require it of us, which we may conclude it does, when his Glory is concern'd; when we cannot enjoy what he has given us, without Sin. In such Cases, we may know that *his* Will is rather to be obeyed than forsaken; *our* Goods are rather to be lost than *our* Souls; that is, we are rather to run the Danger of being miserable in *this* World, than of being for ever ruin'd in the *next*.

This Method of rendring to God for his Benefits, tho' in our Days it be more extraordinary, with regard as to the Event, yet as to the Disposition of our Minds, it should be the Care of every good Christian, to become so intimately acquainted with the Joys of another Life, and the Love of his gracious Lord and Master, that on these Accounts, he could readily part with all he has, for his Glory, and for the Fruition of him.

The Things we are actually, and indispensibly required to perform for his sake, or in other Words, the Obligations we lie under to him, for his infinite Love to-
wards

the Duty of Thanksgiving, &c.

275

Discourse
IX.

wards us, and what we are bound in Duty to render to him for it, are *many*, but at present, I shall insist only upon *these* that follow.

The *First*, is *Faith*, by which I mean, that we must thoroughly persuade our selves of the Reality and Merits of *Christ's* Cross and Sufferings. We are to believe that he died, and that his Death was meritorious.

First, That *he died*. If we look into the Truth of Fact, we have the best Evidence for this of our Saviour's Death, that can possibly be had for any. All Histories agree in it, our Adversaries reproach us with it, and for any one of us to deny, or doubt of it, is to bid defiance to the best Authorities, invalidating Relations of Things past, and so in a great Degree, introducing Scepticism and Infidelity amongst us.

Then, if we look into the Reasons and Foundations of his Death, is it not, at least very probable, that the infinite Majesty of Heaven and Earth would demand some competent Satisfaction, for the Sins of Men? and what Satisfaction can we imagine to be so, but the Death of his dear Son, God made Man? Upon these two, we may infallibly ground our belief of *Christ's* Death. The Easiness and

Probability of the Thing, join'd with the strongest Assurance of creditable Witnesses being sufficient to put it beyond all dispute.

2. We must believe likewise, that *his Death was meritorious*, that by Means thereof, he has procured for us Remission of Sins, and everlasting Life.

The Notion of Merit, is *Obsequium indebitum*. Now, though as our High-Priest, he had undertaken to become a Sacrifice, to lay down his Life, in the most ignominious and painful Manner, and so in Propriety, his Death as a Due upon Contract, could not have any Pretence to Merit; yet as he was the Son of God, of the same Divine Essence with him; the Value of his Sufferings was so completely answerable to the Demands of Justice, that through it, the Hand-writing of Transgressions that was against us, and would have condemn'd us, was blotted out, and a Passage given the sincerely Penitent into everlasting Glory.

He has not only made an ample Restitution to the Father, for our Sins, which nothing but his most precious Blood could expiate; but by an overplus of Goodness, and Bounty, has deserved in our stead, as *Head* of us, the Joys and Happiness of Heaven.

And

And certainly, if we do not render him this; if in return we do not stedfastly believe in him, we are highly ungrateful and injurious.

I pray, would it not be accounted a grievous Affront to an earthly Benefactor, after all his Pains and Care to do us Good, not to acknowledge or own his Favours; not to be sensible of his good Will towards us? Would this be reckon'd grateful, rather would it not be esteemed base, unworthy, and disingenuous, beyond Expression? And if so, what Name can we think of, bad enough for those wretched Infidels, who hardly believe one Tittle of what is recorded, concerning our Redeemer's Love and Pity for Mankind?

As for those others, who are so far from admitting, that they ridicule a Saviour, search out for all the little Shifts they can hear of, to avoid believing in him; they are such dismal Bigots to their own fond Notions, that without God's special Grace, we may despair of curing them. But their Blindness and Hardness of Heart, challenges our utmost Pity and fervent Prayers. And well may we pray for those Sinners, that cannot pray for themselves. God knows, 'tis a most deplorable Case, to be upon the Brink of Ruin, to be just falling into the bot-

tomless Pit of Hell, and not discern the Danger; to be sick to Death, and refuse the Help of a kind Physician, that could infallibly, and would most willingly heal us.

This Duty of *Faith*, in the meritorious Death of a crucified Saviour, is indeed, the least we can pay him, the lowest Degree of Respect that can be thought of; but 'tis the Ground-work and Foundation of all the rest. There's no loving him, unless we first believe in him; no trusting in him, unless we are acquainted with his Care and Power; in short, no discharging any of the Obligations we lay under, unless we be firmly perswaded of those Relations in him, whereon they are founded.

The gaining therefore, and heightening of our *Faith*, is to be made a chief, and I may say, considering the Importance of it, and the Difficulties we must meet with, in attaining it, a constant Part of our Christian Warfare. Our Fight is to *begin* here; and here likewise in the most intense Degrees of this Duty, is our Fight to *end*; 'tis the *Beginning* of Christianity, and in this Life, the *End* of it: This enables us to overcome the World, to resist, and conquer all Opposition, to trample upon Principalities, and Powers, and to sub-

subdue the Kingdom of Darkness. O let us then, without fail, set immediately to the getting of a due Apprehension of all our Saviour's Offices, of all that he performed, and all that he underwent on *our* Account to do us good.

Let us read often, and seriously, the History of his Life and Passion, written in the holy Evangelists; let us meditate attentively, on each single Passage that be-
fel him. A true Worshipper of the Lord Jesus, must omit no one Opportunity, or Accident, that may increase his Faith and inviven his Devotions to him. Every Indignity and Affront offer'd to our holy Master, should be thought upon particularly by all his Servants, to inflame their Love, and especially at their Approaches to his holy Table. So much for the *first* of the Obligations that are laid upon us, by the Kindness of our dear Redeemer, which is *Faith*, a stedfast and well-grounded Belief of the several Periods of his Goodness towards us.

The *next* of our Obligations is *Love*; and no doubt, our *Love* to him, must be allow'd a most natural, and unavoidable Consequence, from a right Consideration of *his* to us. For who can be so obdurate and impenetrable, as to reflect upon the infinite and amazing Condescension of

our merciful Lord, upon his painful, and afflicted Life, upon his cruel and ignominious Death, with an unrelenting and unrepining Heart.

There's something in human Nature so prone to Pity, that even Romances, dismal Stories, that we are forearmed against, and are aware of, even these Deceits of Objects extort it from us. A *feigned* Tragedy calls for our Tears sometimes, as well as a *true* one. When we meet with a Person in Distress, of what kind soever, we are naturally inclin'd to compassionate his unhappy Circumstances. A Stranger feels a certain tender Motion within him, for the Misfortunes of those he never knew. And I believe, that Man must be of a very savage Nature; nay, in my Thoughts, he must be hardly Man, that can forbear to sigh, if not weep, for the Downfall of his worst Enemy. So strong are our Propensions to Acts of Mercy, and good Nature, which are the Foundations of Love. But when Calamities befall *others* for *our* sakes, when they are occasioned by *us*, and are undertaken for *our* Benefit, then, if we have our Senses and Reason about us, it will be impossible to quash that generous and noble Passion.

These

the Duty of Thanksgiving, &c. 281

These two, if seriously revolv'd in our Minds, will produce the holy Flame, and create an ardent Affection for the adorable Jesus. Let us look upon him as our

greatest Benefactor, as he came down from Heaven, left that glorious and happy Place, and condescended to be clothed with Flesh, and to become acquainted with the Necessities, and Infirmities of human Nature. And what surprizing Tenderness is this? what unthought of Care for the Salvation of our Souls?

Behold the same divine Being, God blessed for ever, afterwards leading a Life of Poverty, Sorrow, and Misery, scoffed at, and jeer'd, mocked, and spit upon, persecuted and oppress'd by the combin'd Malice of Men, the highest and most powerful of Men and Devils.

View the stupendous Miracles which were all in greatest Kindness wrought for even the *temporal* Good of Men, interpreted as the Effect of Diabolical Charms.

See that beneficent Act of his, for the Relief of poor afflicted Creatures, casting out of Devils, maliciously supposed to be done, through the Assistance of the Devil.

Observe him, in a Word, enduring, all the whole Time of his sojourning here below, the hardest Usage that Man could suffer,

Discourse
IX.

suffer, and at last put to Death by the Rage and Fury of the Multitude, after a most barbarous and inhuman Manner; his Hands and Feet stretch'd out and nailed to the accursed Tree, his Side pierced through with an Halbert, and his Soul overwhelmed with the inward Sense of his Father's Indignation. And then remember that HE the second Person in the most glorious Trinity, of the same Eternity, Holiness and Power, with God the Father, did, and suffer'd these Things for *our* sakes, in order to bless and succour us, who were without his Help, sunk into the deepest Misery, as has been fully proved before. And such Remembrance, if it be serious and continued, cannot, methinks, but make deep Impressions of Love upon us; especially if we view as particularly the Advantages we obtain by our Saviour's Humility, and Manhood.

These indeed are almost innumerable, but we may reduce them to three Heads, which I barely mention, *1st*. The Pardon of our Sins. *2^{dly}*. The Assistance of his holy Spirit to conquer them. And *3^{dly}*. The Joys of Heaven, after our Departure from this miserable World, which are the greatest Benefits *we* could possibly receive, or that *God* could bestow. They are such as we may assuredly reap the Fruits of,

if

if it be not our own Fault, for the Conditions annex'd may be fulfilled by those that beg the divine Aids on their own best Endeavours.

The Reason of my laying these Considerations before you here, is to excite your *Love* more and more, to make you enamour'd, and ravish'd with that tender Commiseration which has done for us so great Wonders, drawn us out of the Snares of Death, and Hell, delivered us from the Captivity of the Devil, and put us into the happy Condition of being Sons of God, and Heirs of everlasting Happiness. And when pressed home upon our Minds, when often thought of, they cannot chuse but soften them, and plant in our Breasts a sincere Affection for our dear Redeemer.

Could *He* do and suffer so much, so infinitely and inexpressibly much for *us*, and shall *we* do nothing for *him*, not love *him*, nor scarce think upon *him*?

Could *He* leave the Mansions of his Father's House, those undisturbed Regions of Peace, and Light, and Glory, in order to save *us*, and shall not *we* receive him? Rather let us welcome him with Hearts of Praise and Joy, and Gladness; let us chearfully surrender up our selves, Souls, and Bodies, all that we have, and
all

Discourse

IX.

all that we are, to his Use and Service. Let us invite the whole Hosts of Heaven to laud and adore him, and join unanimously in the holy Anthems of Saints, and Martyrs, Cherubim, and Seraphin, who are continually, Day and Night, employ'd in chanting forth the incessant Praises of the Lamb of God, who are always loving and always adoring him.

And O what a delightful Task is this? This indeed is a Task that is to be all pious Christians very Life, and only Business in the *other better* World, and should therefore take up a good Portion of their Time in *this*.

But the *Love* I have been so earnestly recommending, is no enthusiastic Heat or Passion, not the Force of a strong Imagination or distemper'd Brain; it is not that airy fanciful Thing, which some vain Speculatists have made it; it does not consist in refined Notions, or high Theories, but is a solid and substantial, a plain and obvious Thing to be judged of, as Trees are by their Fruits, according to that known Rule of St. John, in his 1st Epistle, 5th Chapter and 3d Verse, *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments*.

The true Love of our blessed Saviour, is such a deep, inward Sense and Feeling of his Mercies, and Goodness towards us, as
ob-

obliges us to resign our whole Man, all our Faculties to his Fear and Service, not suffering any accursed Thing, any Enemy of his, any unmortified Lust to reign in our selves, and endeavouring by our good Advice, and Example, all we can, to extirpate them out of other People. In *this Sense* of the Words, I believe a great many, that make a mighty boasting of their particular Revelations, new Lights, and inward Breathings, that pretend to be all Rapture, Devotion, and Spirit, will be found meer Hypocrites. Just such sort of Men as *Saul* was; he welcom'd the Prophet with unusual Assurance—*Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the Commandments of the Lord*, 1 Sam. 15. 13. In Effect as if he had said; My Conscience is clear, I have nothing to reproach myself with: But hear what *Samuel* says in the next Verse—*What meaneth then this Bleating of the Sheep, and the Lowing of the Oxen which I hear?* Thy Pretences are good, and fair, and plausible, but thy Deeds confute them.

The *same* agrees to these foolish Bigots. Are you indeed, as you would make us believe, so very intimate with Heaven, such sincere Lovers of your God and Saviour, pray then what means your Wickedness, your secret disguised Sins, your scandalous

Discourse

IX.

dalous publick Offences? Are these consistent with your Religion? Are these the Products of that most pure and celestial Fire? Is it Love to your Saviour to harbour those Vices for which he died?

The Considerations I have been urging, will bring forth *another Sort* of Love; a Love that is worthy of our Lord, a Love that he requires of us, a Love that it is our Duty to render him, and which, when we meditate on his Goodness, we can hardly forbear giving him.

It becomes us therefore, to make these pious, seraphic Aspirations familiar to us, by frequent Recollection; otherwise, tho' our Saviour has done *more* than enough, to deserve our Love, tho' 'tis a Tribute he requires, yet we can never pay it. And so I proceed to the

3d and *last* thing to be spoken to, and that is *Affiance*. This is such a firm Confidence of his Love and Power, as inclines us to repose all our Concerns, without Distrust or Murmuring, in his Hands; not in the least doubting, but he'll order them all for our Good.

Affiance is founded on a Sense of *his Love*, which assures us, that he will, all the ways he is able, promote our Happiness, and on a Sense of *his Power*, whereby we are satisfied, that as he desires to
further

further our Good, so he can effectually do it. And in all the Misfortunes of human Life, in all publick and private Calamities, in spiritual and temporal Afflictions, where can we so securely fix our Hopes as on the Blessed Jesus?

Who is there that has so much Love to pity, or so great Power to help us? Why then do we rove about, or wander in vain, from one Object to another, seeking Rest and Ease, and can no where find it? Why do we not rather betake ourselves to the only sure Anchor of our Souls? What Sorrow and Trouble would *this* rid us of? How serene and smooth, how easy and chearful might we be, when the World about us, is rough and troublesome? How pleasantly might we retire to this Port, and preserve and recruit our Forces?

But this Duty of *Affiance* is to be perform'd, not only for the sake of *our own* Welfare, but for *his* Glory too. 'Tis what we are to render unto the Lord, for all his Benefits. Instead of costly Sacrifices, and sumptuous Oblations, he expects no more than what it is our chiefest Interest to give; he only desires that we should honour him.

Has he done so far beyond all created Comprehension for us, and do we still distrust

Discourse
IX.

distrust him? Has he rescued our *Souls*, and are we afraid nevertheless, to trust him with our *Bodies*? Has he delivered *some* of us, over and over, from bodily Pains and Sickness? *Some* from Perils and Dangers, by Land and Sea? *Others* from the great Pain and Peril of Child-birth; and what? shall not he, who hath deliver'd us *often*, and is *always* able to deliver us, *still* deliver us?

O preposterous Reason! gross Stupidity! is there any Thing, that we Men, whose Passions are fickle, and whose Power is short; is there any Thing that we, I say, *more* resent than to be distrusted? To have our Friends and Dependents jealous of us? And can we imagine, that what is so great an Indignity to the *Creature*, will be put up, or will not be revenged by the *Creator*?

Affiance is such a becoming Virtue, has so much of good Esteem and Honour in it; the contrary is so irreputable, so odious a Quality, that I think not to render this to our Lord for his marvellous Kindness (if it be possible not to render it him) is a shocking Crime, heighten'd with all the Aggravations that Sin can well be heighten'd with.

Let all then, that name the holy Name of Jesus, for shame, lay aside that pettish
fro-

froward Temper, that uneasy repining Humour, which so discredits our Religion, and puts us on a Level with *Turk* and *Jew*.

We have a merciful Saviour, a good and gracious Lord, a dear, indulgent Master, that defends and protects us, that will ease our Grief, and mitigate our Pain and Sorrow, that will support us *under*, or deliver us *from* all our Troubles. He is, as the *Psalmist* in the 18th *Psalm* rightly styles him, *our Strength, our stony Rock, and our Defence. He is our Saviour and our God*; on him therefore let us depend; in him let us always put our whole Trust and Confidence, and he will undoubtedly prove *our Buckler, the Horn also of our Salvation, and our Refuge*.

I have now done with what I at first proposed: I have shewn in the

1st. Place, What our Saviour has performed to deliver sinful Man from the Curse of God, and to restore him to the divine Mercy. We were all Sinners by the Fall of our Father *Adam*, and so had justly forfeited God's paternal Love, and incurred his sore Displeasure; and must have been for ever miserable without a Saviour.

U

Christ,

Practical Discourse of

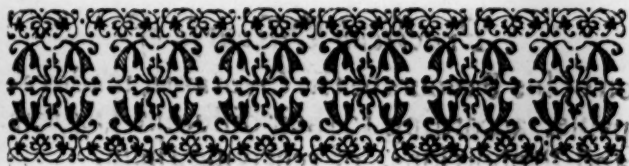
Christ, that he might redeem us from this sad Condition, purchased for us a new and gracious Covenant, wherein is promised Forgiveness of all our Sins, and Assurance of God's Favour and future Happiness, if we do but sincerely repent, and bring forth Fruits worthy of Repentance, *viz. new Obedience and actual Holiness.*

In the 2^d. Place, I consider'd what Obligations our Saviour thereby laid upon us. These indeed are many, but I reduced them all to three Heads. 1. Faith. 2 Love. 3. Affiance. These are some, of the many Obligations that our Saviour's unparallel'd Bounty ought to lay upon us, and if we do but reflect a little on the Grounds and Foundations of them, they will appear highly reasonable.

But if we shut our Eyes against so clear and discernable a Light, we shall go blindly forward, in the Paths of Death, without considering what Christ has done for us, or examining what we ought to do for him; so we shall never believe in, or trust, or love him, who infinitely deserves the best Returns we can make, though not in the least advantag'd by them, who deserves our
most

the Duty of Thanksgiving, &c. 291

most exalted Praises, holy Lauds, and Discourse
continual Thanksgivings, and requires the IX.
best Obedience, and utmost Service of
our whole Lives. To him therefore,
with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be
the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory
for ever and for ever. Amen.



PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

ON

God's great Goodness to
Mankind.

*Pentb Discourse for Wednesday before
EASTER.*

ZECH. 9. former part of the 17th
Verse.

For how great is his Goodness?



THE Goodness of God, is Discourse
what I purpose for the Sub-
ject of my present Dis-
course; *not* his *Essential*
Goodness, whereby he is
rendred great, and excel-
lent in his *own* Nature, but his *Relative*
Goodness, consisting in the Communicati-

Practical Discourse of

on of his Favours to the *Creatures*, made capable, according to their different Degrees and Proportions, of receiving them.

With the Effects, and Produce of this Goodness, we are every where surrounded : Effects most wonderful, and amazing !

If we look up to the Heavens, they are the Works of his Hands ; If we consider the Earth, and the Seas, to whom can we ascribe their original Disposition, and long Continuance, but only to the great Creator, who form'd them for his own Pleasure, and placed them in such Order, and within such Limits, as he judged convenient for them ?

Would we take a distinct and accurate Survey of the whole Universe, we should discern the Characters of infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, imprinted manifestly, so as not to be destroyed, or effaced on every Part of it.

Every, the smallest Herb that grows, the vilest Insect that creeps upon the Earth, whatever other Vertues they may want to bring them into Knowledge, and Request, are yet in an happy Condition, to declare the Worth, and speak the Praises, and celebrate the Goodness of that God, by whom they were made.

For which Reason the holy Psalmist does not confine his Exhortations to Praise
and

and Gratitude, to the *sensible* Parts of the Creation, but *equally* requires all the Parts of the divine Workmanship, to set forth his Praises, and make his Name glorious; all have the Power of praising God, as they are the bountiful Emanations of his Infinite Goodness.

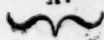
But I mean to enlarge no farther upon the Goodness of God, than as *we* our selves are concerned in it, and in order to this, I shall recite to you several Instances of his Good-will, and Compassion towards the Sons of Men. Whence we may be inform'd, how very suitably, how very significantly, the Prophet does in *this* Place express himself by way of devout Astonishment and holy Extasie.

As when our Souls are overpower'd, and filled with Things, whose eminent Lustre strikes home upon our Imagination: As in *this* Case, we break forth suddenly into Rapture, and Admiration; so in like manner, the Mind of God's Prophet, being thoroughly filled with the Apprehension of his Goodness, could no longer contain, but unavoidably bursts out, and discloses the important Matter, with which it was over-charged, and with which it labour'd: For *how great is his Goodness?*

First, It is great, in respect of our Creation.

U 4

Se-



Practical Discourse of

Secondly, It is great, in our wonderful and constant Preservation.

Thirdly, It is great in innumerable Blessings of several kinds, which he is pleased to confer upon us.

Lastly, It is greater by far, great beyond Comprehension, in regard of that ineffable Monument of Love, in rescuing us from our spiritual Slavery, and redeeming us from endless Misery.

The *first* Instance of God's great Goodness, is seen in *the Creation*. To create a Thing, is the Formation of it, either out of no preceding Matter at all, or out of Matter altogether indisposed to receive such Impressions and Forms as the Creator stamps upon it. And Creation is in both these Ways, the peculiar Privilege, and sole Prerogative of God, and in both results from his Tenderneſs, and Compassion, having no Mixture, no Allay of private Interest, or Self-designs, to vitiate, and corrupt the Principle from whence it flows.

For what Accession can be given to that Happiness which is superlative, and shall never end? What Additions can be made to that Power which already is supreme and uncontrollable?

Can

Can that radiant, that consummate Excellency of the divine Being, be rendered more illustrious by any outward Occurrences?

Can the noblest Enterprises, the most curious Performances, contribute to yield him greater Satisfaction, than what he *has*, and *will always* possess, from the glorious Contemplation of *his own* Perfections?

God has within himself an inexhaustible Source of Pleasures, and Delight, of Pleasures more refined, yet more substantial, more compleat, than those mean and transitory Enjoyments, which we call by that Name.

His Happiness is suited to his Nature. As much therefore as *his* Nature is above *ours*, so much beyond ours is his Happiness also, larger by far, and of longer Duration.

His Understanding is imploy'd, and most agreeably filled with the several Attributes, and the permanent Glory of his Essence, in viewing that spacious and delightful Scene of his own Excellencies, a Scene affording sufficient Matter for the unconfined, and unlimited Extent even of that Intellect which knows and sees all Things.

The



The Will of God is placed in utmost Perfection, bearing the deadliest irreconcilable Aversion to all Evil, and loving passionately all Good.

Every Thing that is Praise-worthy, and desirable, every Thing that is truly great, and honourable, meets, as in its proper Channel, in God. And thence is issued by many Streams, upon such Objects as he is pleased to honour, but so, that not any part of the Creation, nay, nor the whole together, can come up in Beauty, and Perfection with him; they cannot come near him.

Now God injoying all possible Degrees of Felicity from himself alone, whatever he is pleased to bestow on the Creatures, is to be judged purely the Effects of his Kindness and Love, because he has no Interest to serve, nor any inordinate Desires to gratify.

How frequently in human Affairs do Men promote their own particular Ends, their base sometimes, and villainous Purposes, under pretence all the while of publick Good? How frequently are those Offices of mutual Kindness and Affection, which happen in our Intercourse with one another, if we could view them nearer, the Effects only of Artifice and Subtilty, not of free Bounty or sincere Friendship?

But

But every Action of our supreme Lord, is utterly void of the least Blemish or Stain, and is grounded wholly upon his Love and Kindness to us, upon that most generous, most exalted Principle, whereby he is inclined to communicate some Share, or rather some Resemblance of his glorious Perfections, and incomparable Happiness, to the Creatures, to whom he would give the Power of enjoying it.

This I think, a very useful Consideration, in order to give us just Sentiments of God's Goodness, that he is acted upon no by-Ends or self-Interests. This is the true Sublime of Goodness, the very Height, and Perfection of it, and can no where else be found but in God alone.

He made us, at the first erecting out of the Earth, that beautiful and graceful Piece, which he designed for the Ornament and Command of all besides. He furnished us with our reasoning Faculties, whereby we might become fitly qualified, to exercise the Dominion he intended to confer upon us. All the rest of his Productions, some of them had no Life, some only a sensitive, and the best but a meer animal Life, none of them knew any Thing of Reason ; Sense and blind Instinct were the Rules by which *they* were to be determined.

But

Practical Discourse of

But when G O D made *Man*, he made him of an higher Rank, and superior Nature; he endowed him with a reasonable, thinking Soul, that should be always at Hand, to assist him in the regular, and exact Discharge of his respective Offices, that should teach him always *how* to act up to the Dignity of his Station: A Dignity that he could lay no Title to of himself, but was owing *wholly* to the Benignity of his Maker, who might as well have placed us on a Level with the Beasts, as have exalted us so much above them. That therefore we excel *them* in any Degree, especially, *that* they are subjected to *our Command*, and designed for *our Use*, these are marvellous Instances of the divine Goodness.

Holy *David*, in a serious Contemplation of them, wonders what could prompt God to bestow his Favours, with so plentiful an Hand, and in so distinguishing a Manner, upon an Object so unworthy of them. *Lord*, says he, *What is Man, that thou takest Knowledge of him? Or the Son of Man, that thou makest Account of him?* Psalm 144. 3.

It is our Duty, in imitation of this bright Example, to get our Minds thoroughly possessed with the extraordinary Honour God has done us, in creating us the Head
and

and Glory of his Workmanship, investing us with an Authority over our Fellow-Creatures, and planting in them a Dread and Awe of that Authority. Discourse X.

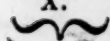
God Almighty, without any Inducement or Obligation, is pleased to give Marks of his particular Esteem to Man, and Man ought certainly in return, to pay the Tribute of humble and devout Acknowledgment of constant and sincere Obedience. He, who could very justly make us Servants, has voluntarily been pleased to give us the Command and Privileges of Masters. He has of his own Free-will, appointed us Lords and Rulers of the whole Creation here below, which is obedient in some Measure to our Commands, and subservient chiefly to our Uses.

Oh! What a blessed State, what a flourishing Condition has the good God graciously allotted us? The Majesty and agreeable Proportion of our Bodies, the several Faculties and Powers of our Minds, are all the Gift of the Creator, at whose Disposal they were.

When we compare our Nature with *that* of the *most perfect* of other Species, O how transcendently beautiful, how exceedingly glorious do we appear? We are designed for nobler Ends, and are made capable of enjoying more noble Satisfaction, than

Discourse

X.



than any Creature on Earth. But what is the Foundation of all our Glory ; *we*, as Clay in the Hands of the Potter, could give nothing to our selves ; but the Potter could frame us into Vessels of Honour, or Dishonour, as he saw fit. So that the only Reason we can assign of our exalted State (which is in Truth a sufficient one) is the Will and Pleasure of him, who disposes, and orders all Things, his Goodness and Mercy gave us the Preeminence. *O how great was that Goodness ? How infinite that Mercy ?*

Secondly, Another Instance of God's gracious Goodness is seen in *our continual Preservation*. He does not leave us exposed, and destitute to the wide World, but watches over us with the prudent Care, and tender Regards of the most affectionate Parent.

Even from our Mother's Womb our Dependance is upon him, and 'tis he that has kept us under the Covert of his Wings, secure from Dangers ; which threaten, and surround us every where.

Did he think fit to withdraw his supporting Hand, the goodliest Frame would immediately sink, and crumble into the Dust, and Particles, from which it was made. We have acquired no new Strength, and are able, *now* no more to *preserve*, than

we

we were at *first* to *create* our selves. Our intire Trust and Confidence must be in God, who alone *can*, and *has* hitherto most wonderfully preserv'd us.

What a weak and helpless Condition are we in, during the two Periods of Infancy and Childhood? By how many fatal Accidents might we be obliged to go off the Stage, before ever we had acted any Part almost on it? How then comes it to pass, that we escape so long the Mouth of the Devourer, that our Lives are continu'd, notwithstanding the numberless Casualties by which they might very easily have been shorten'd?

Had we any Foresight in our Infancy to prevent, or Strength to encounter Difficulties? No, alas! we had not; we had not so much as the free Exercise and Use of Reason. But unarmed, and unguarded, naked, and helpless, we came weeping into the Vale of Misery, liable to ten thousand Misfortunes, from which we cannot retreat; and from the Force whereof, we have no Protection or Shelter.

And yet, such is the indulgent Goodness, and Affection of our heavenly Father, that these Misfortunes, for many Years together, pass by, without molesting, or disturbing our Quiet. Were we to consider the innumerable Variety of Instruments,

struments, which Death might make Use of, and how Destruction arises from every Quarter; we should imagine it next to impossible for us, under those Circumstances of Weakness and Distress, in which we first appear, to keep our Ground, and make Resistance to Powers so formidable.

Indeed this would be quite impossible, but only that we are secured most effectually, by the unwearied Vigilance, and perpetual Care of the divine Providence, ever awake for our Defence and Safety.

We are indebted to God for our Preservation in our Infancy and Childhood; Seasons wherein we are laid open to many Attacks, and are without Strength to gain the Mastery over them. But God delights to manifest *his Sufficiency in our Weakness*, on which Account he seems more particularly to watch over our Persons, at such Times as we stand most in need of his Assistance.

But we are not less obliged to him neither for *his constant Persuasion*. As soon as we arrive at the Years of Sense, and Manhood, perhaps then we may be thought more capable of securing our selves, than we were before, and so Providence may be concluded to take less Notice of us.

But

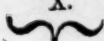
But upon Examination, we shall perceive, that the maturest Age of the oldest Man, and the most perfect Wildom of the wisest, are however unable *singly*, or in *Conjunction*, to preserve us amongst those imminent Dangers; which on every side with Violence press in upon us.

Our Life is, in the very Pride and Strength of it, but a meer Vapour, a brittle, precarious, and uncertain Thing, liable to be injured, and destroy'd, by the meanest and most trifling Accidents.

The *Air* we breathe in, by a few noxious and pestilential Vapours, may sweep away whole Nations at once, and suddenly depopulate the most flourishing and renown'd Cities.

The *Earth* may open, and quickly swallow up our Persons, and Possessions, leaving behind very few to lament the Loss.

Or if we be not by the propitious Providence of Heaven, liable to these Disasters (as thanks be to God we in these Parts have hitherto been generally secured from them) yet are there not many, exceeding many other ways, whereby our Lives, in the midst of their Bloom and Glory, may be cut short, and fade away, and wither like the Grass or Flower of the Field? How many Diseases are there of several Kinds,



and Natures, that carry us, in Opposition to all Remedies, to our long Home? nay, how many are the Misfortunes, sudden, and violent, that dispatch us without warning, and allow us little or no Space of Repentance, and Recollection?

I need not, I presume, make a Catalogue of our Miseries, they are what fall daily under our Eyes and Observation. We have daily Instances of the strange, unaccountable Accidents that contribute to bring Men to their End, who were just before in as good Health, and full as like to live to old Age, as any of us.

Now, that which I think a proper Reflection, and highly useful from this is, that we ought to acknowledge our Preservation to be from God; he alone can foresee the Evils that will happen, and he is our sole Protection, and Refuge under them.

Why might not *we* as well as *others*, have been long e'er this, involved in Darkness? Why are *we* more than *others*, permitted to continue still in the Land and Number of the Living? Had we more Sagacity to discover, and prevent Danger, or more Ability and Strength to remain unbroken, and whole when they attack'd us? Nothing of this can be alledg'd, as the Cause of our Deliverance, but we must

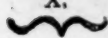
must derive all from God, who has been pleased to guard us from the Evils that have befallen many others, and has afforded us a farther Season to amend; and make our Peace with him, before we go hence, and be no more seen.

It is God, to whom we stand indebted for our *constant* Preservation; it is he that has kept our Feet from falling in those slippery Paths of human Life, wherein so many skillful and expert as we, have notwithstanding fell before us, to shew that we are not of our selves, in a Capacity to support, or preserve our selves.

But perhaps we can produce some Title to the divine Protection; O no. All the Title *we*, even the *best* of us can pretend, is only the immerited Love, and Pity of God to us.

The Affairs of Men in this Life are changeable and very unfixed; their Continuance and Stability is from God, who has no Reason to intermeddle, but purely for our Advantage, that he may in Times of Distress, appear our Shield and Defence.

Thus the Goodness of God is manifested to be extremely great, by *our constant Preservation*, consider'd as *single* Persons, and apart from Society.



Practical Discourse of

It may not be amiss to observe, that our Preservation likewise in *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical Societies*, is owing to the same most benignant Providence.

Our *Civil* Rights and Privileges, which we enjoy as incorporated into one great Body, could not have been conveyed down to Posterity, unless the Power of Heaven had condescended to become frequently the Asserter of them.

Some of our Neighbours groan under the insupportable Weight of Oppression, Tyranny, and arbitrary Power, whilst *we* flourish, and are in perfect Liberty.

This Distinction, this important, this happy Distinction is the Effect, by no Means of *our own* Care and Diligence; but is to be ascribed *entirely* to *the mighty Hand of God*, which has in all Things the Preeminence: It is his Work, his wonderful Work, that he is pleased to perform for us.

For how often, and how dangerous Attempts have been made to overturn our Government, and subvert our Laws, the very Prop and Foundation of that Government? And yet, through the Goodness of God, they both continue, and are established, I humbly trust, *upon sure and lasting Foundations*.

Once,

Once, by the implacable Fury, and ignorant Zeal of Men *contentious, and not obeying the Truth*, our excellent Constitution was in *both* Parts of it (for it seems they are inseparable) dissolved and abolished, and Anarchy and Confusion took Place in their Room. But the Desolation of our Land was not to be perpetual, and 'tis well known, how visibly the most high God appeared, in bringing about the glorious, and ever memorable Restoration.

And since that we were in Dangers (too apparent to be conceal'd) from another Quarter, but those Storms blew over, and the Almighty by his outstretch'd Arm, and the joint Concurrence of many surprizing Events, wrought our Deliverance.

A small Acquaintance with the History of the *English* Nation, would soon discover how much we are oblig'd to God, for preserving to us the invaluable Rights of a well-established Government, when such violent Methods have been pursued, and such strong Forces united, and all malicious Intrigues used in order to deprive us of them. He has for many Ages past, exerted his uncontrollable Authority in the Defence of those publick Blessings, which else we had never enjoyed. An Argument this

Practical Discourse of

of his great Goodness, that we ought deeply to be affected with, and frequently to remember.

Then considered as *Members of Christ's holy Catholick Church*, and of the soundest and most primitive Part of it, *the Church of England, as by Law established*, we have great Reason to acknowledge the infinite Goodness of God, in calling us out of Darkness, to the Light of his glorious Gospel, and in reforming us from the gross Errors, and Corruptions of that Church, which fell from her first Station, and kept not the Faith.

'Tis too large a Task, tho' a very easy one, to set before you the great Goodness of God, in preserving, most miraculously, our Church, when Enemies of divers sorts have laid their Heads together, and been confederate against her.

Rome, sensible of the vast Damage she sustains by us, as we are the Bulwark, and chief Support against her illegal, and unjust Incroachments, has employ'd all her wicked Art, and Subtilty, to undermine and dissolve us; but through the Goodness of God, fighting on our side, she has been unable hitherto to prevail against us. But, *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give Glory, for thy Mercy, and for thy Truth's sake.*

And

God's great Goodness, &c.

311

Discourse

X.

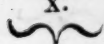
And so I proceed to shew in the
3d. Place, That *God's great Goodness* is
eminently concern'd in making our Lives com-
fortable and happy by innumerable Blessings
of several Kinds, which he is pleased to con-
fer upon us.

It would be Matter of considerable Ser-
vice, for every Man, thankfully to recol-
lect the manifold Mercies, *Temporal* and
Spiritual, bestow'd upon him, that so
he might always be in readiness, upon the
first View, to praise and magnify the Do-
nor of them.

We, most of us, enjoy a competent
Share of Health, and worldly Necessaries,
and as to *spiritual* Matters we have plen-
tiful Opportunities of worshipping God,
and of being instructed in the Religion
that pleases him.

These are some of the most remarkable
Blessings, that God, as it were, promif-
cuously distributes to the World, without
always observably distinguishing the De-
serts of Persons, on whom they fall; be-
cause the Time, for exact Retribution to
every Man, according to his Deeds, is not
yet come.

Health is a Blessing that makes Way
for the Enjoyment of all others, which
loose their Relish, if our Bodies are indis-
posed. What signify the best Diversions,



and the most melodious Strains of Musick, to those that lie languishing on the Bed of Sorrow? Ah! what are all the Gaities of Life, to any Person whom Sicknefs has disabled from reaping Satisfaction from them? What would one give to be released from the continual Pain and Uneasiness of a weak, and sickly Constitution? The richest Miser, a Man the most tenacious of his wordly Treasures, would consent to part with them readily, for the sake of his Health, which is a Pearl of the most inestimable Value, and can't be purchased at too dear a Rate, nay, often it so falls out, that no Price is sufficient to purchase it; for the giving and restoring of it, are Mercies of God's free Gift, and are not at the disposal of any mortal Man.

O let us then, a little reflect how highly we are bound to thank God for his freely giving, and long continuing to us a Blessing of so great Importance, and of such universal Efficacy. The Commonness of the Favour, ought not at all to abate our Esteem, and Value for it. To prevent our Insensibility, and Ingratitude on this Occasion, it is very fit we should sometimes be visited with Pain, and Sicknefs, that we may know the Worth of Health, and thence be taught to bless and magnify God's great Goodness that bestows it on us.

It

God's great Goodness, &c.

313

Discourse
X.

It is God's great Goodness, I say, that bestows it on us; it does not proceed from *our own* Care, nor from the Medicines prescribed, but from God, who is pleased to give his Blessing to them. He makes our Constitutions strong and vigorous; he keeps the Spirits from Mutiny and Disorder, and sees that every Part and Vessel of the Body does punctually discharge its Duty, in the Digestion of our Food, and in the conveyance and return of Blood and Spirits. The many minute, and fine Parts, of which we consist, and the Uneasiness they create (if in the least disorder'd) render our Health very precarious, and nothing short of the Power and Goodness of God, could well preserve it.

As God gives us Health, so he gives us also a competent and comfortable Subsistence, supplying us with such a Share of worldly Necessaries and Accommodations, as he judges to be sufficient for us. There are but few, to whom he has denied one honest Means, or other, of being comfortably provided for. He affords us Food wholesom, and nourishing in abundance, and our Nature is so framed, that we may live without Delicacies. He gives us Raiment, if not costly enough for Mens ambitious, and extravagant Humours, yet enough, to secure them from the
the

Discourse the Injuries of Weather, the Severities of
 X. Cold, and the Scorplings of Heat.

We may think indeed, that what we have is the Fruit of our own Industry, but *that Industry* could never have been successful, unless God from above, had been pleased to make it so. It is from him, that all Prosperity, and Success are to be derived. He has the Issues of Things in his keeping, and he either blasts all our Projects, and Endeavours, or crowns them with a good Event.

That we have wherewith to satisfy the Demands of a craving Appetite, and something more, than is just necessary to that Purpose; That we are enabled to live according to that Station he has assigned us; that, in one Word, every Day, and every Minute of each Day, affords some Instance of Mercy; to whom must we return Thanks for all this, but only to our supreme Benefactor, *from whom every good and perfect Gift cometh?*

These are the Instances I choose to mention, of God's great Goodness to our *Bodies*, in creating and preserving them in Health, and affording a suitable Supply of Necessaries for *their* Support. Look which Way you will, the sensual Man who so passionately loves his Body, must, if he would but think seriously, find Reason to

God's great Goodness, &c:

315

extol the infinite Goodness of God towards
it. Discourse
X.

It was by the Goodness of God, that the Body had at first a Being, that it is continued in Being, and furnished with what may so long continue it; this too is the Consequence of divine Goodness. But we Christians know, that the *Soul* of Man is vastly preferable to *his Body*. Wherefore the Goodness of God to the *Soul*, will still more eminently manifest, *how great that Goodness is*. And we need not be at a loss to prove the Care God has taken for our Souls to be exceeding great, when we consider in the

Fourth Place, How he sent his only begotten and dearly beloved Son into the World to redeem us from spiritual Slavery, and to rescue us from everlasting Misery. This is that sacred Pledge, this is that ineffable Monument of his Love, which evidences his Goodness far better, than all the generous, charitable Acts he exercised for the Welfare of our Bodies. As much as the Soul is more precious than the Body, so much greater is the Goodness, that preserves and secures the Soul, than that which centres only in the Preservation and Security of the Body.

Whatever Difficulty may be pretended, in apprehending the Way of God's Proceedings,

Practical Discourse of

ceedings, and explaining the Manner of them, the happy and advantageous Consequences will abundantly convince us, of the reality of those Proceedings. Our Souls filled with Pollution, and Naughtiness, had most deservedly incur'd the Displeasure of God, and most justly forfeited his Favour and Good-will. And God might have left us to perish for ever, in the deplorable Condition into which our Sins had brought us.

The *Angels* when *they* fell, tho' of a superior Nature, had no Opportunity of Reconciliation offer'd to them. But so kind, so indulgent was God to *us*, that he undertook, and effectually accomplish'd our Delivery, at no smaller Expence and Trouble than the sending of the dear Son of his Love in the Flesh to save us. And this Salvation was to be wrought by nothing less, than the bitter Death, and meritorious Sufferings of his only begotten Son.

Now, what can we conceive in our selves, that should incline the great Creator to be thus surprisingly bountiful? Ah! what indeed? Can Filth and Impurity be any kind of Recommendation to him, who is of *purser Eyes than to behold Iniquity, and charges his Angels with Folly?*

Can

Can Imperfection, and Weakness; can extreme Misery and deep Distress? Can these be thought worthy the Friendship, and Alliance of infinite Power, immense Goodness, and exalted Happiness? O no. But tho' they are not worthy the Friendship of God, yet they are proper Objects for his infinite Goodness to be displayed, and fully manifested in the retrieving of them. And it was his infinite Goodness that was the chief Spring and Original, the commanding, efficacious Principle that gave Birth, and Life, to the whole Design.

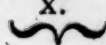
Infinite was the Goodness of God the Father, that sent his Son; infinite was the Goodness of God the Son, in vouchsafing, (notwithstanding the perfect Knowledge he had of the wretched Condition he was going to be exposed to) infinite I say was *his Goodness*, that notwithstanding did vouchsafe to come, to come to such a sinful Place, to come in such a sorry Manner, and to come to such an important End.

That the most high God should so far overlook our Infirmities, that he should contrive to expiate our Offences; what! are not these so many undeniable Proofs of the Greatness of his Love, and Compassion towards us?

Well

Discourse

X.



Well may the Redemption be stiled *the great Mystery of Love*. 'Tis a *Mystery*, which we have a very comfortable Share in, but a *Mystery* it is, by Reason of the Height and Perfection of that Love from whence it issued.

Under this Head, Occasion is offered, to treat of the several *spiritual* Advantages that Christ has procured for us. But they are Subject enough for many Volumes.

I shall only put you in Mind of one great Advantage, which we enjoy, I mean the plentiful Opportunities of Worshipping God, and of being instructed in the Religion that best pleases him, in our Mother Tongue, and in so pure, and regularly re-form'd Church as ours, wherein *all Things are done to edifying*.

Many are deprived of the Gospel, many have it very sparingly, and imperfectly preached unto them, whereas, blessed be God, we of this excellent Church, have it by Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept, plainly, and sincerely delivered to us.

The Duties relating to God, our selves, and Neighbours, are, in plain English every Lord's Day, so faithfully explained, so affectionately urged, and powerfully recommended, that we must stop our Ears
if

if we would prevent the Sound of the divine Charmer, from breaking in upon us.

What would *some* Religious Persons in distant Countries and Nations, give for *those* Opportunities, of Divine Worship, which *we* slight, and reject, and only because they are common? But even *this* is a wonderful Token of God's Goodness to us, that he is pleased to continue the Light of his blessed Word, and the Benefit of his Ordinances, in their full Perfection, to a People, that I fear, has generally made such unsuitable Returns for them.

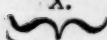
Not any thing that our dear Redeemer did; no, nor any Hardships that precious and immaculate Lamb of God so patiently suffer'd, but shew'd, beyond Contradiction, his tenderest Love and most affectionate Concern for *our* Good——Through *him* indeed it is, we enjoy the means of Grace, and the pleasing comfortable Hopes of Future Glory.

Since then the Goodness of God to us is so exceeding great, in as much as he made us, he preserves us, and gives us Health, Food, and Raiment, and reaches out to us all the Comforts and Necessaries of Life; and then, by sending his only begotten Son in the Flesh, he has taken Care, not only to deliver us from perpetual

Bon-

Discourse

X.



Bondage, but to provide for us a far better Life, an abiding, and eternal Inheritance with himself in Heaven, and in order to fit us for it, he affords us the Means of Grace, and proposes the most inviting, and glorious Rewards ; what remains but that we be hereby led to Repentance, and Works of Mercy, Love, and Charity ?

I know no Motive, nor Argument more likely to awaken us to the hearty Practice of both these Duties, than a serious Consideration of God's Goodness; and therefore, it is made use of by the Apostle *St. Paul*, and the beloved Disciple *St. John*; *Knowest thou not*, says the one, *that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to Repentance*, Rom. 2. 4. And beloved, says *St. John*, *If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*, 1 John 4. 11. And now,

Most glorious God, and our most kind and gracious Father, how frequent, and how wonderful are thy Performances, for poor, degenerate, lost, sinful Man? Thou art Good, and thou doest Good; and of thy Goodness to us, there is no End; and therefore it is that we have Liberty, and Occasion to come now before thee, not only with Prayer, but joyful Thanksgiving.

Our very Souls do magnify thee, O Lord, and all that is within us do praise thy holy Name, for the many, and unspeakable Mercies,

God's great Goodness, &c. 321

Discourte

X.

Mercies, and Favours we have received from thee. For our Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessings of this Life, but especially and above all, we praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, for that astonishing Act of thy Goodness, in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, and in and thro' him, for the various and excellent Means of our Salvation and eternal Happiness. Inspire us, we beseech thee, O Lord, with such an ardent Love of thee, and such a lively Sense of thy Goodness to us, as may encourage, and constrain us to our respective Duties, both to thee and our Christian Brethren; and may cause us always to live like such Persons in the World, as have been, now are, and hereafter look to be special Objects of thy Favours, and Members of that divine, and heavenly Society, who shall praise, and love, and enjoy thee for ever and ever. Amen.

Y

PRACI-



D

V

EL

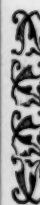


Te

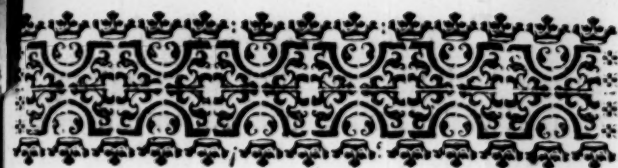
t

M

c



in
to



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
OF

Worthy Communicating.

*Eleventh Discourse for Thursday be-
fore EASTER.*



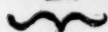
I COR. 10. 21.

*Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, and
the Cup of Devils: Ye cannot be Parta-
kers of the Lord's Table, and of the Table
of Devils.*

THE Persons to whom St. ^{Discourse}
T Paul does, in this Epistle, ^{XI.}
and in this Chapter, ad-
dress himself, living amongst
Idolaters, seem to have
been influenced something
in their Opinions by them. And in order
to keep fair in the Judgment, and Esteem
Y 2 of

Discourse

XI.



of their Neighbours, they were willing to be perswaded, that the communicating, now and then, with them, tho' in Rites very impious, and detestable, might be consistent enough, with the Purity of that Religion they had lately embraced.

But our Apostle, we find, does not allow of any such Composition ; but tells them in the Verse before my Text, *that those Things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils, and not to God*: And *I would not*, says he, *that ye should have Fellowship with Devils*.

The Way to have Fellowship with Devils, was to partake in that Worship, which Idolatry directed them to. And perhaps by the Cup, and Table of Devils, may be intended some peculiar Heathen Customs, at that Time, in Use amongst them. Concerning these, he affirms expressly, that whatever mild and comprehensive Sentiments they might have entertained of them, as harmless, inoffensive Institutions ; yet their communicating on some Occasions, at the Table of Devils, was utterly irreconcilable with their sincere communicating at the Lord's Table.

The two Tables, *that* of the Lord, and *that* of Devils, were so directly opposed to each other, that there was no coming to both of them, without being justly liable

able to the Suspicion of Hypocrisy, and Deceit in our Approaches, or without being really guilty of them. *Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord*, that is, ye cannot be hearty, and unfeigned in commemorating your blessed Saviour in the Holy Sacrament, if at the same Time, ye worship the Devil, by such Oblations, as the Idolaters offer to him.

I shall therefore make it my Business, at present, to shew what Sins may be judged inconsistent, utterly inconsistent with our duly receiving of the holy Sacrament, and what Sins are to be esteemed, in this frail and mortal State, compatible with it. In order to which Design, it will be necessary,

- I. To explain the Nature of our Sacramental Engagements.
- II. To shew by what Means they are notoriously violated, and when they may be said to be kept. Then,
- III. It will be necessary to consider how far, and in what respects the Fear of not being true to our Engagements ought to influence us.

First, The first Thing is to explain the Nature of our Sacramental Engagements, which consists of two Particulars.

Practical Discourse of

1st. We solemnly engage to renounce our Sins. And,

2dly. We engage as solemnly, to practise for the future, all sorts of Vertue to the End of our Lives.

1st. *We solemnly engage at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to renounce our Sins.* These, upon serious Recollection, we perceive infinitely odious to the Purity of the divine Being, who cannot look with Complacency, cannot look without Abhorrence, and Indignation, upon the smallest Transgression.

Justice in God, obliges him to punish, proportionably to the Quality of the Offence committed against him. And the Sense of this must mightily help to breed in us sincere Sorrow and Repentance for our past Wickednesses, and hearty Resolves to forsake them for the Time to come.

But it is not sufficient, that we resolve only in general, against the whole Body of Sin, but we must make our Resolutions against such particular ones, as we are oftneft, and most exposed to; such as have natural Propensities to forward them, or the Authority of great, and near Examples to recommend them.

It becomes us indeed, to work up our Minds to a thorow disgust against all Sin, but at the same Time, Care is to be taken,

ken, that in particular Instances we gain the Mastery over it. One part then of our Engagements at the holy Sacrament, is to renounce, and to resolve against all Iniquity, and especially against those Branches of it, to which we are most liable. This is one Part of our Sacramental Vow ; we vow to forsake all Sin, those Sins, above the rest, which do most easily beset us.

Second, Another Part of our Engagements at the Sacrament, is, to practise for the future, all Sorts of Vertues to the End of our Lives. There we openly declare our hatred to Vice, and our Love to Vertue, readily renouncing the one, and chearfully embracing the other.

As Sin, we perceive, is highly abominable in the Sight of God, which is the Reason of our forsaking it, so Vertue being discern'd acceptable, and well-pleasing to him ; 'tis upon this Account, that we oblige our selves to the strict and constant Exercise of it. So that the whole of our Sacramental Engagements comes under this only Consideration, that we chuse God for our Lord and Master, promising to live all our Lives long, in faithful Obedience to him, and in unreconciled Enmity, to whatever shall, at any Time, oppose his Will.

Practical Discourse of

But we are to remember, that these Engagements are our renewing of the Covenant of Grace, established betwixt God and us, in Virtue of the Satisfaction, and Merits of our blessed Saviour. Now no more can be intended by renewing a Covenant, than was intended in the first Original and Make of that Covenant.

Wherefore, that we may not be deceived by the general Signification of the Terms, our Sacramental Engagements are express'd in, we must reflect upon the Covenant, to which they belong, and that is the *second Covenant*, or the Covenant of Grace. The second, as different from that other, which was rendred void by the Fall of *Adam*, and the Covenant of Grace, as not insisting upon intire unfinning Perfection, but supplying our Defects, by a propitiatory Sacrifice, that is offered on our behalf.

In *this* Covenant, we promise to be sincere in our Worship, and Duty to God, and he promises to accept our sincere Obedience, notwithstanding the many Imperfections, and Failures, with which, at the best, it is always attended; he promises to pardon the Sins we commit upon Repentance, and Amendment; and we promise on our sides, to repent and amend, not wilfully to persist in the Breach of his
holy

holy Laws, but as much as in us lies, to act in the whole Course of our Lives according to them.

By Baptism, we are initiated into the Covenant, and resign up our selves to the Service of our great Creator. And since, through the wretched Corruptions of fallen Nature, which are increased daily by our own Folly, we neglect to perform our Parts of this gracious Covenant, our Redeemer has ordained and consecrated the Elements of Bread and Wine, to give us fresh Admission into it. So that all we do, at our coming to the Lord's Supper, is to be looked upon, as bearing a necessary Relation to that sacred Compact, which is there to be renewed.

We are to renounce *all Sin*; this according to the Tenor of the Covenant imports, that we are resolved to mortify in us the Inclinations and Desires of Sinning; that we will use our best Endeavours to be perswaded of the Odiousness of Sin; but it does not import, that we oblige our selves, under the Penalty of Damnation, *never* to commit the *least* Sin. For in this Life, we cannot possibly arrive to that heavenly, that exalted Pitch, but shall be always subject to manifold Infirmities, and sometimes conquered by Temptations.

So,

Practical Discourse of

So, as for the other Part of our Sacramental Engagements, whereby we solemnly declare our Resolution to practise for the future, all kinds of Vertue, to the End of our Lives ; this, if interpreted by the Covenant to which it is necessarily to be refer'd, will signify our going on steadfastly, in all the Methods of Discipline and Grace, in order effectually, to give God the full Possession of our Souls and Bodies. But it does not, it cannot signify, that we will never, at any Time, or upon any the most pressing Instances, yield to the neglect of any sort of Duty. Our Vertues will never on this side Heaven, be so complete, as to exclude all Deviation from the Will and Commands of God.

The Nature of our Sacramental Engagements, is not to be rightly judged of ; but by considering them as they belong to the Covenant of Grace, and are *no more, no other than the Repetition of it.* And if we judge of our Engagements by this Rule, we shall soon discern the Force and Meaning of them. Engaging solemnly to renounce our Sins, implies our *not wilfully, not habitually* continuing in them, but that we do fully design by the Divine Aids, to change our wicked Way of Living, for a continued Course of unfeigned Piety.

Worthy Communicating.

331

Discourse
XI.

Piety. By God's Help it is, that we hope to make this universal Amendment in our Lives; we can have no Hopes of doing any Thing to Purpose, by our own Strength and Sufficiency; all our Strength, all our Abilities are derived from above.

This will yet farther clear the Nature of our Engagements at the holy Table. For when we promise to renounce Sin, it cannot be meant that we of *our selves*, without the Aids of divine Grace, shall be able to forsake it; but we promise, by Virtue of the Succours of God's concurring, his assisting Spirit, to gain the Conquest over our Vices, which of all Conquests is the most honourable and glorious, exceeding beyond Comparison, the Trophies that are gained by Fatigue, and Toil, and Bloodshed. The Victory that is obtain'd over our irregular Appetites, and sinful Lusts, when they are brought into their due Obedience, and Subjection; this Victory is worthy the vigorous Efforts, and constant Pains that must of Necessity be employ'd about it.

But in vain do we strive and labour, unless we, at the same Time, implore sincerely, and fervently, the sure Direction, and beneficial Influences of the *Spirit*, to be shower'd down plentifully upon us.

If

Practical Discourse of

If we rely upon our selves, we alas! in the Business of Religion, are false and perfidious to our selves. 'Tis we our selves, that are chiefly instrumental in our own Destruction.

Our whole Nature vitiated, and depraved in all its several Faculties, leads the Way, and urges Motives to all the Sins, and Follies we at any Time may be guilty of. So that to promise, in Confidence of our own Ability, to renounce Sin, or to practise Vertue, would be very ridiculous, and utterly ineffectual.

In our Promises of this kind, which are to be esteem'd sacred, and to be perform'd with Faithfulness, we ought to have our Eyes fixed stedfastly on that superior, that irresistible Principle, the Spirit of God, in prospect of whose gracious Presence, the devout Communicant rejects Sin, and gives himself up to Goodness and Vertue.

And we may reasonably imagine, that the Miscarriages of many, in their solemn Resolutions, are to be imputed principally to *self Presumption*, and *Arrogance*. They have entertained too great an Opinion of their own Abilities, and Talents, which failing to answer their Expectations upon Trial, they have judged their Promises rash, and impracticable, and so have given over all Hopes, and laid aside all

De-

Designs of observing them. Whereas what the Christian cannot do of himself, he can do easily through Christ, by his Spirit strengthening him. Upon this Spirit, and the Right we all have, as Members of one Body, to the Illumination and Assistances of it ; upon *this* it is, that our Engagements at the holy Table ought always to be founded.

Therefore we may discern how indispensably requisite and fitting a Qualification *Humility* is. In renouncing our Sins, we renounce our selves too, because we in our selves are so prone to Sin ; we renounce our own Sufficiency, and acknowledge that our best Strength is but meer Weakness, our highest Wisdom meer Folly ; we renounce in short, every Thing in our selves, and place our intire Hope and Confidence in the most high God.

Thus the worthy Partaker of Christ's Body and Blood, comes with the lowest Prostration of Body, and the most profound Humility of Soul, as being fully sensible of his own Inabilities, and of that extraordinary Goodness and Compassion, which only can effectually support him. That Goodness will indeed support him under all the Discouragements, and fierce Opposition he is sure to meet with ; but
then

then he must take Care, not to be wanting in Diligence and Industry. The Motions of the divine Comforter are to be nourished, and improved, in our Souls, and not stifled, or suppress'd in their very Infancy.

Such is the Nature and Constitution of our Sacramental Engagements, which considered with reference to the Covenant of Grace, renewed by them, are to be explain'd by the Tenor of that Covenant, whereby we learn, that sinless, and exact Conformity to the Laws of God, tho' unquestionably our Duty, yet is not absolutely insisted on, as the Condition of our Happiness; but Sincerity and Repentance will be allowed of in their stead. When we engage solemnly to renounce all Sin, and practise Vertue, no more can be understood by us, than that we are determin'd to go as far in both these, as our diligent Heed to the Suggestions of God's Spirit shall enable us. For as I said even now, our Dependance in this Matter, is upon the holy Spirit, whom we should earnestly beseech, *in all Things, to direct and rule our Hearts.*

2d. I am to shew, by *what Means* our *Sacramental Engagements* are notoriously violated, and when they are said to be kept. I take this to be a Point of great Weight and

and Concern. What is it that occasions many to keep quite away from the holy Communion, and many more to act unworthy of it; but that *neither* of them have a right Judgment of the Engagements, and Obligations, which are then laid upon them?

Some pretend, and I believe, in the Generality, it is only Pretence, to have severer Sentiments than ordinary, of their Sacramental Vows and Promises, and this, they say, keeps them from Receiving. *Others* have certainly too slight Thoughts of these solemn Obligations, and this prevents their being at any Pains in the discharging of them.

To both these, a brief Account of the Means, by which our Engagements are either violated, or kept, will be exceeding necessary. *Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils*, says the Text. Your drinking the Cup of the Lord will prove prejudicial to you; if you consent afterwards, to take a Draught of the *Cup of Devils*. There's no mixing these two Cups so dextrously, as that you may, with Freedom, drink of both.

By Metaphors adapted to the Customs of those Times, the Apostle sets forth to all succeeding Ages, the Necessity of being sincere and upright in our Approaches
to

to the Lord's Table, in which we lay upon our selves the strictest Obligations of being ever true to the Interests, and Kingdom of our blessed Lord. And therefore, to partake at any Time of the Table of Devils, is, in Effect, to cast off our first Lord, and disown our Allegiance to him. For, as by coming to the Table of the Lord, we profess that we are his Subjects, so for the same Reason, by going to the Table of the Devil, we cancel our former Obligations, and proclaim *him* our Sovereign. Hence we may infer, that the receiving of the Sacrament, signified evidently, by partaking of the Table, and drinking of the Cup the Lord, is turned to our Disadvantage: Except we be religiously strict, in abstaining from those wicked and disorderly Practices, which taste deep of the Cup and Table of Devils.

This Consideration of it self, may teach us, what some, one would believe, have never learnt, that the Sacrament has regard to the Conduct of our Lives, and is no farther serviceable, than by the Influence it has upon them. For are there not some that shew so little Reformation and Amendment of Life, after the Sacrament is over, that one might well conceive, they knew of no Obligations they contracted at it? They think Communicating

ting a Matter, rather of Course and Formality, than of Duty, the whole, they conclude, is done within the Church Doors, and trouble themselves no more about it.

Sad and dreadful, I confess, is the Case of these Men, who do not discern the Lord's Body, but treat the Remembrance of his Sufferings, and Death, with Indifference, and Contempt.

It is a great, a most pernicious Error to imagine, that when we once have dedicated our selves to Christ at the Sacrament, nothing, no, not a wicked Life can blot our Names out of his Book, and place them in the black Records of Hell and Death. All our Dedications, with whatever Pomp and Ceremony they may appear, are utterly unavailable, and insincere, in the Sight of him who views our Hearts, and sees clearly the Secrets of them, unless they bring forth the good Fruits, of Righteousness and true Holiness. 'Tis Sham and Mockery to offer to resign our Souls, and Bodies to *his* Service, when in reality, both are as eagerly as ever, engaged in the Service of the *Devil*.

To come to the Lord's Table without taking some Care in pursuance of our Resolutions there, to reform our Lives and Manners, such coming will be so far from

Practical Discourse of

advancing our growth in Piety, that it will be the greatest Hindrance to it, and end only in the Aggravation of our Crimes. Let this then be laid down for certain, that we may easily fall into the Snare of the Devil, notwithstanding we have consecrated our selves to God, and into *this* Snare we fall most evidently, when our Vices continue as numerous, and have as much Sway over us *after* the Sacrament, as they had *before* it.

Thus our Engagements are notoriously violated, and I presume, every Body will allow, that except some Alteration be made in our Lives, we must certainly be esteemed unworthy Receivers. But then, what kind of Alteration, and of what Extent? From these Points arises all the Difficulty.

It is plain from what was before observed, that intire, and compleat Obedience, without the least Blemish or Deviation, is not what we engage for at the holy Table, and therefore,

1st. Sure we are, that our being guilty of *some Sins*, is *not* to be accounted a *Breach* of our Resolutions. Our Resolutions may be very sincere and very efficacious, tho' at the same Time they do not operate so far as to secure us from the Commission of all Evil. As it is unquestionably true, that

that our Resolutions must have their Effect and Influence on our Lives, so it is equally true, that none of our Resolutions can render them in all Regards blameless, and unrebukeable.

In the State, and Condition God has appointed us here below, we shall frequently, even the best of us shall frequently find Occasion to bewail, and acknowledge our Infirmities, which betray us to Sin, without giving any Alarm, or raising in us any Apprehension of its Approach. This is a State of Probation, of Exercise and Trial, not of Perfection, but of leisurely Steps and wearisome Advances. The utmost we can do, is by often recollecting our Dangers, to unite our scattered Strength, and put our selves into a Posture of Defence, which yet will not prevent Surprise, nor arm us against the Stratagems of our subtil Adversaries. We must by no Means expect to lead a Life free from *all* Sin, and it is from no Fault in our Sacramental Performances that we are *sometimes* guilty of it. It is not every Offence that makes us drink of the Cup, and eat at the Table of Devils, Sins of *Surprise*, and *Infirmity* will inseparably attend us. I add,

Secondly, That *every voluntary* Transgression, is *not enough* to tax us with the

Discourse

XI.

utter and notorious Violation of our sacramental Engagements. For we are to consider the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, as making those who come to it, not Righteous of a sudden, but by Degrees. At first we may gain, by this Ordinance, a Sense of our Sins, and our repeated Approaches will quicken, and actuate this Sense into Hatred, and Detestation ; from whence we shall very naturally be by Degrees carried on to a Conquest over them.

Wherefore, tho' we are still so far carnal, as to commit Sin, yet if our Relish, and Approbation of it are diminished, if we find any Sort of Check, or Restraint upon our licentious Appetite more than formerly ; these are comfortable Tokens of our having received the Sacrament to Purpose, and with Sincerity. But to make our *never* committing *any* voluntary Sin, to be the Test of our having *worthily communicated*, seems too severe, and will much discourage the faithful Attempts of young Beginners.

It is in some Degree the reviving an ancient Heresie, which asserted Sins committed after Baptism, unpardonable. The Reasonings upon this hold stronger in the Case of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, than in *that* of Baptism ; and were those Reasonings good, we should defer

fer coming to the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, (as the Hereticks did to Baptism) till the very Article of Death, when we may be out of Danger of redounding all void by the Commission of Sins, for which we can obtain no Pardon.

Sins *after* the Sacrament are aggravated highly, but not rendred so bad, as to be past all Remedy. Repentance will heal the Wound, and give us Ease and Soundness too. But let not what I now say, give the least Umbrage to Wickedness. Let it only remove the Objection so common in the Mouths of many, that terrifies them from receiving the Sacrament.

This is the Fountain of Blood, wherein we may freely wash, and be healed. This is our sovereign Antidote, our impregnable Defence against the Contagion of Sin. Here we remember the bitter dolorous Agonies Christ suffered for our Sins, which cannot fail of exasperating us against them. This is the Way by which we may overcome our Enemy, and stand it out unhurt against the fiery Darts, that envenom'd Malice, and infernal Fury do perpetually cast upon us.

What unskilful Warriours are *they* then that neglect, and how exposed must *they* be that refuse this Armour, and are only armed with such sorry Weapons, as as-

Practical Discourse of

ford no Protection, and can make no Resistance?

God does not design by this heavenly Institution to insnare us, provided we commit any voluntary Sin, not to allow us afterwards the Benefits of Repentance. This is not his Design, but he designs to improve and sanctify our Minds, to reform and amend our Lives, not all at once, but by Degrees, and frequent Repetition.

Could *once* Receiving destroy in us *all* Sin, what Occasion is there for our being required *often* to receive? The Sins of Infirmary, and those of Surprise do not render us unworthy Communicants; nor does even every voluntary Transgression come up to a notorious Violation of our sacramental Engagements; it is sufficient that we are *more* upon our Guard against these Sins, and concern'd heartily for our Weakness in committing of them.

But as *every particular voluntary Sin* is *not enough* to bring us under the Guilt of *communicating unworthily, and to our Condemnation*; so we are to remember, on the other hand, that when our Sins are *habitual*, when they are committed, without Remorse of Conscience; and finally, when we remain every whit as obdurate and unreformed as heretofore, these Circumstances

circumstances shew beyond Dispute, *that we are not true to our solemn Promises*, but perfidiously consent to violate them.

1st. then, *When our Sins are habitual and customary*; this amounts to a Breach of our Sacramental Engagements. We do not engage, according to the Tenor of the Covenant, never to fall into any Sin; but we renounce the Habit, and continued Practice of all Sins. To go on therefore, in our usual vicious Measures, without Alteration, what can we infer from thence; but that our Resolutions and Professions have wanted of that Sincerity, with which we ought both to make, and to observe them?

2^{dly}. *When we sin without Remorse of Conscience*, it looks as if our Engagements had been of small Effect. For that Consideration and Thought, which is necessary in order to the due receiving of the holy Eucharist, cannot but awaken us to a Sense of our Sins, and the Odiousness of them, which is utterly inconsistent with our committing them, void of Remorse and Uneasiness within.

To see Men hold on in the Paths of Unrighteousness, unaffected with the Greatness of their Guilt, and Danger, seems to argue, that their Promises at the Lord's Table are quite forgotten, and

Practical Discourse of

the Performance of them never minded; and so is to be judged as a *notorious* Breach of our Engagements.

Conscience is a troublesom Companion to wicked Men, and remonstrates against their Proceedings, with an unbyass'd Impartiality, and its Clamours are not easily silenced; but when ever they are so, the Man is delivered over to Blindness, and Hardness of Heart, to commit all Iniquity with Greediness, and without Reluctancy, which is a most deplorable and unhappy State.

One main Design of the Sacrament, is to keep Conscience awake, by imprinting in us lively Ideas of the Amiability of what it encourages, and of the Dishonour and Reproach of what it blames. Great Reason have we to conclude, when Conscience is lull'd asleep, that we are guilty of breaking our Purposes, our deliberate Resolves, which would have kept it, if observ'd, vigorous, and awake.

3dly. *When upon the Survey of our Lives, we find our selves every whit as obdurate and unreformed, as we were before; hence likewise, we have just Grounds to conclude, that our solemn Engagements are utterly insignificant.*

We are not to imagine, that our Engagements should produce *immediately*,
per-

perfect Obedience, but we are not to rest satisfys'd, till they produce some Effect, and begin to work some kind of Reformation in our Lives; till they do this, we may depend upon their being grossly violated. By these Rules, if we pass a Judgment, concerning our Sacramental Engagements, to renounce Sin, and practise Vertue, we shall easily discern, when we have been true to them, and when we have not.

Our remaining as Unregenerate and Sinful as ever, committing Sin habitually, and without Regret or Anxiety of Mind, without any Remorse of Conscience, this argues us unworthy Communicants; this is Partaking of the *Cup of Devils*; but we may be sincere and affectionate, and our coming to the Sacrament may prove greatly serviceable to us, provided it abates our Value for Sin, and increases our Love of Vertue, though at the same Time we must be sadly sensible of our falling into *some Sins*, and of our neglecting *some Vertues*. Every Time we come to the Lord's Table, if we can but observe our good Dispositions strengthened, and our evil ones in any Measure mortified; this may give us Encouragement to go on, to get greater Degrees of Strength, assuring us that our Labours have not hitherto, nor shall

shall be finally *in vain, in the Lord.*

But perhaps it may be urged, that the making any kind of Alteration in us for the better, is what we *cannot absolutely promise*; indeed, we cannot promise *this* of *our selves*, but by Virtue of the holy Spirit of God, which is always ready to assist us, we may promise and perform a great deal. 'Tis upon this holy Spirit, I told you, all our Engagements are to be grounded, and whatever is promised, whatever is endeavoured, without repeated fervent Prayers, and humble constant Dependence on this Spirit, will soon vanish, and come to nothing.

From what has been said upon the two first Particulars, I believe it will be easy to resolve what I promised in the

3d. And *last Place* to consider, that is, *how far, and in what Respects the Fear of not being true to our Engagements ought to influence us.*

It ought, no doubt, to breed in us the greatest Awe and Reverence imaginable, of the sacred Mysteries, to which we are invited; it ought to teach us, that those Mysteries are not for unhallowed Spirits, especially, if they cannot be perswaded to be washed, and cleansed.

At the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we enter into very strict, and solemn Engagements.

gagements. O let us not therefore, rashly venture on the sacred, and mysterious Elements, without religious Awe, and serious Meditation. But let us prepare our Souls to meet the Bridgroom ; let us wash our Hands, if not in Innocency, yet in Sincerity of Repentance, and Fervency of Devotion, and so let us go to the Altar of God.

Wise Men, in *temporal* Affairs, use to consider the Practicableness of Things, before they promise to perform them. So ought we to do, we ought to consider, what we are about to promise, and the several Methods to be pursued, for the sincere keeping of them. This is what the Fear of being false to our Engagements will unavoidably suggest to us ; it will cause us to proceed with Circumspection, and Advice, which is the best Preparation for the holy Sacrament, but should not, on any Account, prove an Objection against our coming to it.

St. Paul is in this Place exhorting the *Corinthians* to frequent Communion, and would not be thought to make the Danger of *Drinking the Cup*, and *partaking of the Table of Devils*, an Argument, why they should forbear to eat at the Table, and drink of the Cup of the Lord.

The

Practical Discourse of

The only Use he would make of the Danger, is to excite them to due Degrees of Vigilance, and Concern, to watch against it. And this is the Use we ought to make of the Fears we may have, of walking unworthily of the Sacrament, not to discourage us from it ; but to come to it with the greater Devotion, and more earnest Care of our Hearts and Lives.

No hard Terms are required, it is expected that we should grow better, but Allowances are given for our many Infirmities, and we have the Co-operation of the blessed Spirit, to direct, and assist us always. And except we wilfully throw our selves upon Destruction, we may be sufficiently secured from falling into it, which is never done, but when our Sins are as much esteem'd, and as much practis'd as ever. But happy will it be for us, if we find our selves beginning to amend, as we certainly shall, unless we are grossly deficient, and wretchedly perverse.

I hope, I have in good Measure taken off the Force of that popular Plea, wherein the Fear of proving false to our Sacramental Engagements, is pretended as a Reason to detain us from the Sacrament, and have shew'd what Sins are utterly inconsistent with our duly receiving, and what

Worthy Communicating.

349

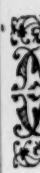
Discourse

XI.

what are compatible with it. If our Fears of Sinning are real, they will certainly be so far from hindring our coming to the Communion, that they will press us to it, as the most effectual Means of conquering, and subduing Sin, growing daily in Grace, and proceeding in all Vertue and Godliness of Living. The Neglect of the Sacrament, occasions the lamentable Growth of Sin, and Aversion from divine and useful Exercises, which can never be effectually rooted out, but by frequent and devout Communicating.

May we all then, in the Name of God, and for the sake of Jesus our Lord, as we value and esteem the present Peace of our Minds, and the eternal Salvation of our Souls, prepare our selves for a worthy Participation of the blessed Sacrament, which will to morrow, being *Good-Friday*, and on *Easter-day*, be administred to all such as shall be religiously and devoutly disposed.

PRACTI-



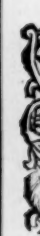
D

T



R

W



OF
W

u



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
OF


The divine Philanthropy.

Twelfth Discourse for Good-Friday.



Rom. 5. latter Part of the 8th
Verse.

*While we were yet Sinners, Christ died for
us.*

 E are now got almost Discourse
within Ken of the saddest XII.
Spectacle that ever was
seen. For a very few
Hours will draw up the
Curtain of the holy Passi-
on, and shew us such a ruful Trajedy, as
was never acted in the World before, even
the

the dearly beloved, and only begotten Son of the Almighty, and most Glorious God, hanging on the cruel, shameful, and bloody Cross, and dying for you, and me, and all miserable Sinners. *While we were yet Sinners Christ died for us.*

The Design of our Apostle, in these Words, is to illustrate God's wonderful Love to Mankind, so largely exhibited in the Passion and Death of his most dear and only Son.

For a righteous Man (strictly just in his Ways and no more) *scarcely one would die*, says the Context. *For a good Man*, (full of Kindness, Generosity, and Benefactions) *peradventure some would even dare to die*. But Christ died for *us* when Sinners, and so neither Just nor Good. And herein is God's Love commended to us, *in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.*

A strange Assertion, but yet *true* beyond all Demonstration, and as full of *Wonders*, as of *Truth*. Here's dreadful Majesty shrunk into a *Worm*, and *Infinity* it self contracted to a *Span*. Here's *Heaven* crowded into a handful of *Earth*, and *Eternity* measured out by *Moments*. Here's the *Light* of the World, *brighter* than the *Sun*, shut up in the dark Lanthorn of *our Flesh*; and the *Life* of *all Things* that

never

for Good-Friday.

353

Discourte

XII.

never can expire, actually extinct by a *tragicall Death*. There's *Miracle* arrived at its *full Growth*, and carried on to its *highest Pitch of Improvement*; and such a *Combination* of marvellous Prodigies in the Words, that *none could* believe them; but proceeding out of *his most faithful Mouth*, they need no further Confirmation.

Now we may *believe and ground upon it*, that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us. Now we may *boast and glory of it*, that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us. Now we may *rejoyce and triumph in it*, that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us.

A cordial Saying, and full of *Joy and Sweetness*, and full of *Life and Comfort*; And Lord, how could I dwell upon repeating it? The more I remember it, the more it affects me; and the oftner I rehearse it, the sweeter is its Relish——
While we were yet Sinners Christ died for us.

In my farther Prosecution of this most important Argument, it will be requisite to make a serious Inquiry into these two Particulars.

First, How, and,

Secondly, Why, the Lord Jesus Christ died.

A a

First,

Practical Discourse

First, How. And it was by *Violence*. Under a *specious* Colour of *Law*, and a *formal* Pretence of *Justice*, he was hurried on to a *fearful* Execution, and *died* in way of *Blood* and *Butchery*. He went as a *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *Isaiah* 53. 7. A *true Character* of his *calamitous*, and *terrible* End, as well as a *just Account* of his *Meekness*, in *enduring* it.

Perhaps a *fair* Death he *could not die*; for *that's* the Fruit of *Sin*, which *could not* taint the immaculate Son of God. And being *free* from *that* pestilent Cause, he might not be subject to its pernicious Effect; and therefore, he labour'd not with our Diseases neither.

Tho' he took our *Infirmities*, which are complicated with our Nature, and fall in with the human Frame and Constitution: yet being *clear* from *Sin*, *contranatural* Distempers *could not* fasten on his *purest* Innocence.

But if by being void of inherent Guilt, he *could not* die a *natural* Death; yet being made guilty by *Imputation*, he *could* die a *violent* one, and *so* he *did*.

And *horrible* it was for the *Kind* of it. Which made St. Paul note it with *emphatical* Aggravation: *Phil.* 2. 8. He became obedient unto Death, even **THE DEATH OF THE CROSS**. Intimating *that* to be

worst

for Good-Friday.

355

Discourse
XII.

worse than other Deaths. And so it was in three Respects.

1st. It was a dishonourable Death. Free Men, and Persons of any Account, never suffer'd it. It was proper to Slaves almost, and when highly criminal; which made Tacitus call it, Servile Supplicium, the Villains Punishment. Yet this ignoble Death our Lord and Saviour underwent. He endured the Cross, despising the Shame, Heb. 11. 2. A clear Proof that his Crucifixion was infamous, and attended with grievous Disgrace, tho' he generously overlooked the Ignominy.

2dly. It was a painful Death. As tormenting as it was reproachful. Doubly cruel, as it was sharp, and as it was lingering. Torturous it would have been to any of us, but much more to Christ, whose Body was more pure, and a Medium of finer, and quicker Sensation than ours.

3dly. It was an execrable Death. And therefore he is said to be made a Curse for us, Gal. 3. 13. For as we read, Deut. 21. 23. He that is hanged is accursed of God. That very kind of Death proclaims those that suffer it, to be vile and cursed Creatures; for in Token of as much, they are forced to expire in the Air, as being unworthy to die upon Earth, or even to touch it. But,

A a 2

Secondly,

Discourse
XII.

Secondly, The *next* Inquiry to be made, is *why did Christ die?* And tho' *many* Reasons might be alledged, I chuse rather to confine my self to *that one* the Text suggests, which comprehends *all*; He died for US. Not because *he deserved it*, but because *we needed it*, and might be *benefited* by it.

He died for *our* Redemption, that *his* *Passion* might satisfy for our Sins, and demonstrate the divine Justice, and rescue us from the Punishment of Eternal Death; and that *his* *Merits* might reconcile us to God, and put us into a Condition of Grace, and Peace, till we come to the Possession of Immortal Life.

Socinus and his Followers violently oppose this Catholick Truth. But all that read and consider the learned *Grotius's* Treatise of *Christ's Satisfaction*, may fully acquiesce in the Belief of *this* important Article. Tho' I cannot but wonder (and 'tis wondrous unreasonable) that *Men* should so strangely cavil at it, and quarrel with it, when *they alone* are so far concerned in *that* Satisfaction, as to be made *happy* by it, and to reap eternal Felicity from it.

But when Christ *thus* died for us, in so dishonourable, and base; in so painful, and cursed a Manner, and all to the End that

for Good-Friday.

357

Discourse

XII.

that he might save us miserable Sinners; what useful Improvements may we now make of *this* so concerning a Doctrine? And,

1st. *How mighty and marvellous a Love must the holy Jesus have to Sinners?* When he wept over *Lazarus* in his Grave, the *Jews* cried out, *Behold! how he loved him.* But O how strangely did he love *us*, for whom he did not only weep, but *die*, writing his Love, as *Draco* did his Laws, in *Lines of Blood?*

This Inference rises from the Text, *God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us.*

One of the surest Evidences of hearty Love, is enduring *Hardship* for the beloved Party. 'Tis easy for one to say, he loves me; but he that suffers cruel Things for me, proves his Assertion by a *strong* Argument. And *such* Proof has Christ given of his vehement Affection to *us*.

For when he became a Mediator between God and us, what heavy and direful Evils did he suffer, in executing his Mediatorial Office for the Good of Men? O flaming Love, that could not be quenched by such Floods of Miseries as brake in upon it! O invincible Love, that could not be conquer'd by such Armies of

Practical Discourse

Difficulties as incamp'd *about* it, and fought *against* it. Let *Angels, Men,* and *Devils* hear and say, if there were ever such Love as *this*.

Well might the holy Spirit of God, who gives account of it in the sacred Book, relate it as he does, over and over, inculcating its Truth by repeated Narratives, and multiplied Records and Attestations of it. For indeed, it is a Love so peerless, as might *overset* our Belief, were it to rely upon *single* Evidence. But having the firm Basis of *numerous* Proofs whereon to rest; we are abundantly assured of the Love of Jesus Christ.

O what can he do more to evince he loves us? *Greater Love hath no Man than this, that he lay down his Life for his Friends,* St. John 15. 13. But the Love of Christ was so much greater to us, that while we were *Sinners* (and so *Enemies* to him) *he died for us*. Such an eminent Instance of transcendent Love as *never* was known before.

And if the inspired Word be true, and the Reports it makes from Heaven infallible, his Death was bitter and afflictive. So that if to part with his Life upon *our* Account, and to suffer a tormenting Death, be sure Tokens of superlative Love, then our Lord had *such* Love to *us*, and witnessed

nessed the same, by *fairest* Testimonies.

I could go on to relate a longer History of his matchless Love, and such as the Devout, and Pious know to be true from *sweet Experience*. (And let it not be thought a vain Digression) For hitherto I have noted but *common* Love dispensed *promiscuously* to every one.

The Lord Jesus gave himself a Ransom for *all*, and was made a Propitiation for the *whole* World: and the *sorriest* Creature that can write *Man*, was redeemed with the precious Blood of GOD, tho' *we* think *too little* of it.

But how many Expressions of his *special* Favour might I enumerate? And *such* Effects of his distinguishing Kindness, as terminate in *our selves*, and make *us* differ from *others*?

He loved us when *Strangers* and *Enemies* to himself; but *that* Love may seem the less, because *so* he loved *Mankind* in general. His Love to *us* exceeded therefore. It grew strong and passionate, like *that* of a nearest Friend, or dearest Relative.

We valued not his Love, and he loved us *still*. We slighted and abused his Love, and yet it *continued*, nay *really increased* towards us. *We* ran from his Love; and *that* followed after *us*. We ran the *faster* from it, because it *followed* us;

Practical Discourse

and it pursued *our Haste* with *better* speed. It overtook us in our wandring Ways, and check'd us in our naughty Courses. It call'd us *home*, and brought us *back*, and tied us by *many* Obligations to him.

Folly and Madness brake these Bands, and away we posted into Sin a-fresh. But as oft as we did so, his tender Love soon spy'd and pitied us: and after all our crooked Stragglings, effectually reduced us.

By Hope, and Fear, and Shame; by Joy, and Grief, and Pain; by Friends, and Foes, and Books; and by a thousand Arts, and Instruments, and Methods; it shew'd us our Sins, and *caused* us to *leave* them. From *Sin* it carried us on to *Holiness*, and being Holy, we loved Jesus again, whose *now* we *are*, and *may*, if we please, be *so for ever*.

O the Goodness! O the Kindness of this God of Love! *ye* are not able to conceive; the greatest Orators are unable to express; *none* of us, nay the *World* it self, is *not able* to comprehend his *vast*, and *high*, and *illimited* Affections towards us.

Let no sincere Christians then, ever doubt of Christ's Love to them. And oh! *that I could cease to do it*, says the scrupulous, dejected, penitent Soul, sunk under

for Good-Friday.

361

Discourse
XII.

under the Sense of its own Unworthiness. *O that I could think ! O that I could believe my dearest Saviour loves me ! then I should abound with Hope, and be full of Joy, and nothing should disturb my blessed Peace. Then I should scorn this cloudy, naughty, inconsistent World, and trample upon Death ; and the Grave it self would be sweet unto me.*

And pray, good Christian, *why* is it not *thus* with *thee* ? Tell me, why dost thou question the Love of *Christ Jesus*, which should be the *Source* of *all this Happiness* ? indeed thou hast *little Cause* to do it.

He came down from Heaven ; he was born of a Woman ; he lived upon Earth ; he died on the Cross, and that *for thee* ; and can there be a greater or clearer Evidence of his *Love to thee* ? *Why* then, I say, dost thou *doubt* of it ? and I may add, how *durst* thou do it ? For surely he must take it ill at thy Hands. When he has suffered so much to prove he loves *thee*, if thou wilt not be convinced, may not he be offended ?

As therefore thou tenderest thy Lord's Displeasure, and would'st not provoke it ; down with Suspicion of his Kindness to thee, and never question it in the least. Turn thy Jealousy to Indignation rather against

Discourse
XII.

against thy self, for thy *groundless* mistrusting of his Love, which he has proved to be unfeigned, and never to be parallel'd. And let me tell thee this great Truth, *If thou art his, love thy self as well as thou canst, he will love thee much better.*

Yet, know withal, that the Sense of his Love dwells *not always* upon the Spirit. Nor does the *temporary* Suspension of it, argue the *least Diminution* in it. The *Father* may love his *Child* never the worse, though he holds him not *always* in his Arms; and *Christ* may affect us *never the less*, though we be not *ever* in his Embraces. We must not think upon every *short* Desertion, that we are shut out of his Favour, or the *less dear* to him.

To fill our Heads with such false Surmises, is but a sly Stratagem of the great Enemy of Souls. And if by *that* Artifice, he could but damp *our* Affections to *Christ*, and so cool *his* again to *us*, the spiteful Fiend would have his Aim.

When therefore, the Sense of our Redeemer's Love is stopp'd for a while, or turn'd from us; let us not gratify our Enemy so far, as to *suspect* the *Reality* of it. Instead of that, let *this* Thought be kept up in our Minds, so long as we live — *That if he had not loved us truly, and infinitely, he would not have endured what he did for us.*

Se-

for Good-Friday.

363

Secondly, *How fervent should our Love be to Christ?* He burns, and flames with Love to us, and shall not *this* warm our Hearts with Love to him? He died out of Love to us, who were nothing but Darkness and Deformity; and shall not we live and be ready to die in Love to him, who is all Light and Life, and Bliss, and Glory, and most perfect and essential Beauty? Can any *purchase* our Love more *dearly*, or *desire* it more *earnestly*, or *deserve* it more *highly* than Christ has done? O let him have it then, let him have it in *greatest Measures*.

Discourse
XII.

While we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us. Lord! what a charming Expression is it; and how powerfully should it work upon us? Methinks, as oft as we contemplate it, it should fill even our Capacities with Love. Our *Hearts* should pant with *Motions* of Love. Our *Minds* should tour in *Thoughts* of Love; our *Tongues* should utter *Complaints* of Love. Our *Breath* should spend it self in *Sighs* of Love; our *Eyes* should overflow with *Tears* of Love, and we should be ready to *weep* in every Corner, to think we *cannot* love our Lord *enough*. But above all, we should abound in *true Obedience*, the properest Signification of genuine Love, according to St. John; *If ye love*

Practical Discourse

love me, keep my Commandments, ch. 14. 15.

Thirdly, *What deadly and implacable Enemies should we be to Sin?* That was the *Cause*, or *sole Occasion* of our Redeemer's Sufferings, and can *we* be at *Peace*, or can we be in *League* with a *Thing*, so *cruel* to our dearest Lord and Saviour?

Would we, in our Thoughts, go out to *Golgotha*, and sometimes take a serious Prospect of *Sin*, through the Blood of Christ, it would swell our Hearts with *Hatred* to it. Remember Sinner, the Lies thou hast told, the Oaths thou hast sworn, the Frauds thou hast used, that Intemperance and Malice, that Envy and Avarice, that Extortion and Oppression, that Cruelty and Hard-heartedness to thy insolvent Debtor, that Pride and Revenge, that Sloth and Sensuality, which thou indulgest, were the *very Nails* that fasten'd thy blessed Lord to the painful Cross. And wilt thou not *shun these* Sins, and so *mortify all* Sins, as to make *sure* of them for reviving more?

And since a View of Christ's Sufferings may conduce very much to the mortifying of our Sins; a brief Representation of them, on *this solemn Day* especially, cannot be amiss, to *that Purpose*.

And

for Good-Friday.

365

Discourse

XII.

And O, that I could set them out to the Life ! O ! that I could paint them in their proper Colours, and shew them in their native dismal Shape, *black* and *hideous* as the *Sin of Man*, and the Abstraction of God's Favour made them ; then I should affect every Hearer's Heart, unless they were so hard as to be *Sorrow-Proof* ; or else *so frozen*, as *never* to be *melted*. But being *unable* to describe them as *I would*, it must suffice, to do it as *I can*.

And I shall point at the Sufferings of his *Death only* (the Solemnity more particularly requiring *that*) though he was a great and grievous Sufferer, through the *whole Course of his Life*.

I observe then, that our holy Lord did *not* submit to *naked Death only*, and to *such* an one as *Heathens* used to inflict upon the *lewdest* Malefactors ; but to *all those* Methods of *barbarous Abuse*, that help'd to render it *more intolerable*.

More particularly, he was *betray'd* by *his own* Apostle, whom he had treated with indearing Sweetness, and ranked in the Number of *his special Confidants*.

And besides the Disgrace of this villainous Act (the *Servant's* Misdemeanor still reflecting to the *Master's* Disparagement) it could not but grate most harshly

Discourse
XII.

ly upon him, to see *one* he honour'd with *such Nearness* to his *Person*, should so abandon *all Love* and *Loyalty*, as to turn *Traitor* and *perfidious Devil*.

He was betray'd with a *Kiss*. And so was *courteously* insnared by a *mock* Civility. O purest Gall, and the very Essence of the Dregs of Bitterness! To die was not enough, but to make his Death more horrid, the *Prologue* to it must be a *Semblance* of *Kindness*, and his Lips must be the *Scene* of a *counterfeit* Amity; while the *Symbol* of *Homage*, and *Salutation* of *Friendship* was basely perverted to a *Signal* of *Treachery*.

He was *sold* to his Adversaries at a *cheap* Rate. Thirty Staters, or three Pounds and fifteen Shillings, was the *goodly* Price of *this* most rare and inestimable Treasure. It just *equalled* him to a *Captive Slave*, or *poor Servant*, who are set at *thirty Shekels apiece*, Exod. 21. 32.

So was this Adorable one valued, *whom they of the Children of Israel did value*, St. Mat. 27. 9. A Brand of eternal Infamy, *that*, wherewith they are deservedly stigmatized from Heaven.

And *thus* the *Jews* crucified him, in his *Mind*, before the *Romans* crucified his *Body*. They put him to exceeding Pain, I mean, in contracting hideous Guilt to
them-

for Good-Friday.

367

themselves, by casting high Indignities upon him. Discourse XII.

Being delivered into the Power of his Enemies, away they hale him with violent Hands ; into the *High-Priest's* Palace, and *Pilate's* Judgment-Hall; where he suffered unspeakable Abuses. His Innocence was derided, his Integrity disdain'd, his Person insolently assaulted, and wretchedly accused.—*Accused wretchedly*, by suborn'd Witnesses, and falsely charg'd with foul Enormities, so very foul, as no Tongues could depose, but such as were confederate with *Fiends below*, and inflam'd with *Spite and Virulence* from *Hell*.

Nor was it possible *their* Evidence should be any Thing but Lies and Slander, black as those *unhallow'd* Mouths, from which it was bellowed with *mercenary* Voices. For our Righteous Lord was guilty of nothing, but of doing Good, of preaching up Holiness, and practising his Doctrine, and recommending it powerfully, by glorious Miracles, and his great Example. But how injurious were *they* to *his* Honour, that *thus* treated his Majesty?

Suitable to his vile Impeachment, was his black, accurs'd, final Sentence, as void of *Equity*, as *that* was of *Truth*; for the Judge

Discourse
XII.

Judge that denounc'd it, was led by the *Multitude*, and the *People* were incens'd and sway'd by a *Party*, and *that Party* transported with *Rage* and *Malice* against him. And was he not like to be *fairly* dealt with, when he was to *stand* or *fall* at the *Will* and *Pleasure* of a *wild Plebeian* Rout, and to be condemn'd as the *giddy* Humours and *tumultuous* Clamours of the *heated* Populace (set on by *rancorous* and *vengeful* Superiours) should dictate and determine? Yet *thus* was the *Roman* President influenc'd into *crooked* Proceedings, and that so far, as *first*, to *try* the Lord of Glory *without Justice*, and then to *condemn* him *without Mercy*.

Agreeable to his Sentence was his *Execution*; his *End* as *dreadful* as his *Doom* was *Arbitrary*; for being put into the Hands of furious Soldiers, they open'd the Cataracts of *Rage* and *Mockery*, and let in upon him an overwhelming Deluge of *Cruelty* and *Reproach*.

For *they* array'd him with a *Purple* Robe, *bore* the *Knee* to him in Affront, and in *flattering* Derision, saluted him *King*; putting a *reed* Sceptre into his *Hand*, and a *thorny* Crown upon his *Head*. They bound him with *Cords*, they beat him with *Canes*, they buffeted him with *Fists*. His *Face* they besmear'd with
loath-

loathsome Spittings; his Sides they mangled with pitiless Scourgings, pierced them through with a Spear, and, at last, hanged him up by his tender Wounds, till through Excess of Pain, and Expence of Blood, he resign'd his pure, bright, and heavenly Soul to God.

And then, besides his *outward*, how *ruful* were the Sufferings which he felt *within*, especially at *Gethsemane*? for there *he was sore amazed, and very heavy, and his Soul was exceeding sorrowful unto Death*, St. Mark 14. 33, 34.

And what was *that* bloody Sweat, in which he most piteously sweltred, but a Symptom of sad Concussions of his Mind, and of inconceivable Anxiety and Perturbation in his Spirit? And how would it have rent the Rocks in *our* Breasts, to have heard that doleful Cry from his holy Mouth, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me*. O our precious Saviour, that ever thou should'st taste of such a Cup for *our sake*! that ever thou should'st drink off such a Cup, for *our Sins*!

So low was he sunk, by this sad Agony, that he was fain to receive Comfort from an *Angel*, which appeared unto him from Heaven, *strengthening him*, St. Luke 22. 43. Whence 'tis remarkable, that the

Practical Discourse

Angel appeared when he strengthened him, which may imply, that he comforted, and strengthened our Lord, by *his visible Appearance*.

This is your Hour, and the Power of Darkness, said Christ, *ver. 53.* So that Devils might be permitted, at *that* Juncture, to do their *worst* to him. And their Power, they might use to *fright* him, by shewing themselves to him, in most ugly Shapes, and by attempting to overset him, with domineering Insults.

But when he was surrounded with Throngs of these mighty Dæmons, which strove to terrify him, by amazing Forms, and insolent Carriage; then on a sudden, to see a glittering Angel break in amongst them, and appear in *his* Defence, must be extremely animating, and chearing to *him*. Especially when the Lustre of this Angel's Countenance, and his majestick awful Presence, daunted, and drove away those monstrous Spirits. But yet how sharp must his Conflicts be, and how terrible his Strugglings with them, when to sustain him, he wanted the Help of an *Angel*?

Now put all these Sufferings together; his *mental* Agonies, and his *corporal* Miseries; and they'll amount to as much as could well be incident to a Person of his
spot-

spotless Purity. But then, where the least Ingenuity is mixed with any sincere Religion, how should *we* abhor *all our Sins*? For *they alone* were the meritorious Cause of these mighty Afflictions to our God, and Saviour.

Fourthly, *How exceeding Humble ought all of us to be? Let this Mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*, Phil. 2. 5. And what Mind was *that*? Why, the most Humble that ever was. For it follows, Verse the 8th, *who humbled himself, and became obedient to Death*. And so, what Duty was ever taught us by a more powerful Pattern?

Had he been made a glorious Angel, the Condescension would have been unspeakable. But how much greater is it *now*? For he was made a *Man*, and not a Man only, but a *Servant*; and not a Servant only, but a *Martyr*; and not a Martyr only, but in *some* Sense, a *Sinner* for us. Consider this, my Fellow-Christian, and then be haughty and high-minded if thou canst. Did the God of Heaven stoop thus low; and shall such a Worm, or Shadow, or very nothing, as thou art, be proud? Shall he that calms the Winds, and curbs the Seas; that awes the Devils, and controls the Angels, be *humble*, and *thus humble*, and shall *we* look big, and take

Practical Discourse

upon us, in Way of *Pride*, or *Arrogance*? ~~Fifthly~~, *How sad will be the Doom of all irreligious Christians*? To them that closely adhere to God, and persist with Constancy, in his Service; nothing can be *more consolatory* than the *Death* of the holy Jesus: But to the Stubborn, and Impenitent, that live, and die in a State of Unrighteousness, what can be a Ground of greater Horror? For in *that* they may read their *future* Ruin, and find an Argument (the *strongest* in the World) to prove themselves undone for ever. For if God would not pity *Innocence* it self, because it stood in the Place of the Guilty: How shall he spare *obdurate* Wretches, in their incorrigible Wickedness?

Let *them* look to it therefore, that go on boldly in Sin, and think in the End to come off with Impunity. The Son of God died on the Cross, for taking upon him *Sins* that were *none* of *his*: And can *they* imagine that *their Personal Offences*, will not expose *them* to *sovereign* Punishment? Can *they* be dearer to God than *he*? Or can *their* Faults be *less* than *his*? Vain is that Mind, and cursed too, and for ever to be abhorred, that can endure such a crooked Thought.

If *one* so obedient, could fall under such Severity, O what Wrath, and what Stings,

for Good-Friday.

373

Discourse
XII.

Stings, and Storms, and Plagues of Vengeance shall be the Lot of the *Obstinate* and *Rebellious*?

As their Custom is, they may flatter themselves with fond Conceits, they may dwell at Ease, and live in Hope, and dream of Peace; but at last, they die in Sin, and the Tongue of Angels can't tell their Misery. O how black, how hot an Hell do *they deserve*, and shall *they incur*, whom the bloody Death of God's own most dearly beloved Son could not reclaim from Evil?

Let us always remember, that his Sufferings were *first*, to redeem us from Sin, and *then* from Hell; and to redeem us *to Holiness*, and *then to Heaven*. But if the Death of Christ does not *so* redeem us in *both* Cases; it will yield us *no* Benefit. Nay, instead of that, 'twill be the saddest Inhancement of our damning Guilt; and the sorest Aggravation of our endless Torment.

Sixthly, *Why should good Christians be afraid to die?* 'Tis not very long since our Saviour was pleased to lay down his Life. And when he did so, it was part of his Design to deliver us from the Fear of Death, Heb. 2. 15. And in order thereto, he has done enough, if we well consider it. For he has broken *its Power*, and taken out *its Sting*; and of a Passage to interminable

Misery, has made it a sure Translation to blessed Immortality.

And when our gracious Lord, by *his own* Death, has *thus* corrected and improved *ours*; we need no more fear to submit to it, than to come under the Paw of a *dead* Lion.

Nay, I may safely add, that *Death*, to *strict* and *zealous* Christians, is a *Temptation* now, rather than a Terror. It is not only *so changed* by our Saviour's Passion, as to be made *tolerable*, but *so improved*, as to become *desirable*.

For by the intire Resignation of his spotless Soul; he sanctified *Death*, into such a Blessing, as has made the *Coffin* preferable to the *Throne*, and *Funeral Rites*, to *Nuptial Solemnities*. And therefore, a late excellent Prelate of our Church, now with God, speaking of the Death of Christ, brake out into this solemn Expression, — *Judge whether all the World can bide us NOT to die.*

Our dearest Lord, by *his Death*, has *so* altered *ours*, that of a *mighty Enemy*, and direct Passage to eternal Torments, he has made it *one* of our *best Friends*. And (though a Paradox to the World) the strait Way to Blessedness; for *so* the SPIRIT has pronounced it: *Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord*, Rev. 14. 13.

Not

Nor can *they* be otherwise than blessed ; for to *them* to die, is to slip out of these Bodies, into the Arms of sacred Angels, and in their safe Embraces, to ascend through the Air, and intermediate Space, to the Habitation of God, where is great and endless Beatitude.

Once indeed, the Path of Death was dark and horrid ; but ever since our Saviour walked through it, he left a Beam of Light behind, to guide and comfort after-Travellers.

Once it was over-grown with prickly Thorns ; but he plucked them up, and as we know, they were turned into a Crown for the Prince of Sufferings, and wreathed about his sacred Temples, and press'd so hard upon his venerable Head, that all their Points were broken. I mean, when the holy Jesus, that precious Lamb of God suffered Death, he subdued it for us ; and *they* that are *his*, may *now* die *without Fear*, because they do it *without Danger*.

And tho' our Passage hence be somewhat uneasy, yet the Pain we feel is soon over, and the Agonies we suffer quickly cease, and then our Souls are born into the World of Spirits, and a Life Eternal. And the Day which our Friends here reckon for *that* of our *Death*, is register'd above, in Heaven's Calendar, for our *Birth-Day*, to a nobler State.

Practical Discourse

Seventhly, *How ready should we be then to part with our Life upon our blessed Lord's Account?* To lay them down, or to give them up in Defence of his Doctrine, or in Maintenance of his Truth and Religion.

God be praised, there's no Occasion for this *at present*, but if ever the Wisdom of Providence should make it *necessary*, then by *his* gracious Aids (which are never wanting to the sincere Lovers of himself) we shall not be backward to the Duty. It would be no more than common Gratitude, and a meer Retaliation of our Redeemer's Kindness, though infinitely short of it.

Eighthly, and lastly, How forward should we be to commemorate Christ's Death? I mean, in the blessed Sacrament of his last Supper, the most solemn Time of Celebrating which, is now at hand.

We know how he commands, *This do in remembrance of me.* And how he implicitly requires frequent Repetition of the solemn Exercise, *Do this as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me. And as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death, till he come,* 1 Cor. 11. 24, 25, 26.

So that if we have *just* Regard to our great Lord's Injunctions, we must not only
per.

for Good-Friday.

377

Discourse
XII.

perform the Duty, but *often* reiterate the sacred Performance. And truly, when our Lord upon *our* Account, was pleased to part with *his* most precious Life, and in Remembrance of *that* matchless Favour, and to keep it fresh in our Minds, set up an holy Institution in his Church; for *us* then, *not* to remember *his* Death and Passion, according to *his own* divine Prescription; will argue us *highly* disobedient, as well as *basely* disingenuous.

And we may farther consider, that as our Lord, by requiring it, has made the Ordinance indispensably necessary; so it is as useful and beneficial, 'tis an Instrument of *many*, and *mighty* Advantages; for it conveys his glorious Self to *us*, and all those innumerable, and inconceivable Mercies, that ever he promised us, or purchased for us. And therefore, to neglect this pious Service, when so very profitable, would be an Instance of our egregious Folly, as well as of our perverse Stubbornness.

As therefore, we would be Friends to our selves, and true to *our own* Interests, even our *greatest* and *eternal* ones; let us repair to the holy Table, with *Frequency* and *Devotion*. Not only *three* Times a Year (of which *Easter* is to be one) (and which is the *seldomest* that our Church

Discourse

XII.

Church expects *any* to come, that are of competent Age, and Understanding in the Principles of Religion, contained in *our Catechism*) but as oft as we have Opportunity, and *no great* Hindrances, or Avocations from it.

And verily, considering what vast Benefits accrue to us, from the mysterious Solemnity; *they* that are Happy in *most* Opportunities of resorting to it, should be *eagerly* desirous of *more still*.

But *we are unfit* (will some object) to *share in this angelical Feast, and would you advise us then, to venture upon it?* O no, God forbid, I should ever, in the least, incourage any Person to come to the holy Communion, without due Preparation. I might as reasonably invite you to eat and drink the rankest, deadliest Poison, as *once* to taste the consecrated Elements, in *a State unqualified*. For then ye eat and drink your own Damnation. Ye expose your selves, that is, to God's dreadful Judgments in *this* World; and unless ye repent, to his *everlasting* Vengeance in the *next*.

Prepare your Souls therefore, my Christian Friends and Brethren, for that heavenly Banquet, by true Repentance towards God, and unfeigned Purposes of a new and better Life; by a stedfast Faith
in

in God's Mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and perfect Charity towards all Men; and then come and partake thereof. For believe it, *neglecting* the Ordinance will be as fatal as *profaning* it. *They die* as certainly, who *starve* and *famish*, as *they* who *glut* and *surfeit* themselves.

Dilcourse
XII.

And therefore, 'tis worthy our Observation, that where the *Gospel* is compared to a *Marriage Feast*, and to a *Royal Banquet* for the *Richness* of it, and so the Entertainment, at our Lord's Table, and at his own Supper, must be a *chief Part* of it; even at *that* Feast, as *he* that came to it *without a Wedding Garment*, or *meet Worthiness*, was to be cast into outer *Darkness*; so *they* that came *not* to it *at all*, were to be *destroy'd as Murthe- rers*, and *their City to be burnt*, St. Mat. 22. 7, 13. This seems to me a most remarkable Intimation, that *not coming* to the evangelical Feast, in its *fullest* Latitude, and so to the *Lord's Supper*, which it comprehends, will expose us to *future Punishment*, as well as *coming unprepa- redly*.

By no Means then, rest in *this* Plea of *Unfitness* for the Communion, nor be at all satisfied, in keeping *from* it, upon *that* Account. Labour rather Night and Day, to bring your selves to a *Sacramental* Worthi-

Discourse
XII.

Worthiness. For if ye do not, ye may chance to die in *that* Condition of *Unfitness*. And then, in the Name of God, what will become of you? For *they* that are unfit for Communion with Christ upon *Earth*, must be unfit for Communion with him in *Heaven*. Into which most sweet, and intimate, most blessed, and ravishing Communion, our Lord Jesus Christ, who *when we were Sinners* died for us, bring us all at last. To *whom with the Father, and the eternal SPIRIT, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

♦ The Prayer.

O Most divine and adorable JESU, the eternally Begotten, and most glorious Son of the ever Blessed and most High God; the great Lover of Souls, the only Saviour of Men, and the gracious Reconciler of Sinners unto Heaven: Thou, who didst fast, and weep, and suffer, and die upon a cruel, shameful, painful Cross, for our Sins: Help us so truly to repent of them, and so thoroughly to subdue and mortify them, that thou may'st be merciful to our guilty Souls.

Cleanse them, O Lord, by thy purifying Blood, and heal them by thy precious Wounds; and let none of the Trespasses we have

for Good-Friday.

381

have at any Time committed, be charged upon us, to our Condemnation. But let thy tender Pity, through the Merits of thy Death, enrich us with such Vertues, and adorn us with such heavenly Perfections, as may fit us for thy Glories, and high Felicities, which thou hast purchased for thy faithful People, that love and serve thee.

And O, that the Ransom which thou once paidst down for the whole World, might be of great and universal Benefit, to all Nations dwelling upon the Face of the Earth; of so great Benefit, as to take them off their Sins, and turn them unto God, and advance them at last to the blessed and eternal Life above. Amen, Lord Jesu, Amen.

PRACTI-



D

T

Thi



Kno

m

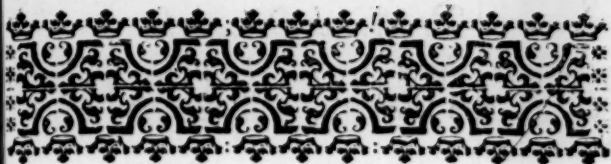
C



to u

Car

nal



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
OF

The Shortness of our Life.

Thirteenth Discourse for Easter-Even.

2 PETER 1. 14.

*Knowing that shortly I must put off this
my Tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus
Christ hath shewed me.*



HA RDLY any Mistakes are Discourse
of so pernicious Conse- XIII.
quence, as *those* which we
entertain of the Body,
whilest we think it of *greater*
Worth and *Importance*
to us than the *Soul*, and bestow *most* of our
Care and *Labours* on it. *This* is the Original
of that Indulgence, and Fondness, we
ge-

generally shew to our 'Bodies, tho' we neglect the Welfare, and Security of our Souls.

And to correct *this* Fault, it will be very necessary, that we reflect often, on the *different Nature, and different Duration* of these two essential Parts, from whence we shall easily learn, *what Respect and Duty* we owe to *each* of them.

In our Consideration of the *Body, this* ought *not* to be forgotten, that we are soon to part with it, which is very elegantly expressed in the Text by *putting off the Tabernacle.*

The *Tabernacle* was a moveable precarious Building, *fitted* for the Convenience of Travelling, and *not* designed as the *Temple*, to stand *always* in the *same* Place. Such a Sort of changeable and unsettled Structure is a significant Representation of the *Nature* of *human* Bodies, which are to be put off and removed, whenever God shall see expedient.

Therefore we find that the Word *Tabernacle* is made use of to signify *those* Bodies, as in the 5th Chap. of the 2d Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and the 1st Verse, *If our Earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved.* And again at the 4th Verse, *We that are in this Tabernacle do groan.* In which Places, the Apostle means evidently

ly our *being*, and *living* in the *Body*.

During the Time we are in the *Flesh*, or in the *Body*, so long we are said to be in *this Tabernacle*, but when we go out of these Bodies, and leave them, then the *Tabernacle* is said to be removed, *The earthly House of this Tabernacle is dissolved*, in St. Paul's Phrase; and in St. Peter's, *We put off these our Tabernacles*.

So in the Verse immediately preceeding the Text, our Apostle says, *I think it meet as long as I am in this Tabernacle*; that is, as long as he was in the *Body*, as long as he lived, but when *Death* came, and devested him of his *Body*, as he was well aware it *shortly* would, *this* was *the putting off his Tabernacle*.

Nor is *this* any way *peculiar* either to St. Peter or St. Paul, but it agrees *equally* to *all Men*. *We* all of *us*, as well as *they*, are to *put off these Tabernacles*, these Bodies of *ours*. We should not look upon our Bodies as what will *always* abide by us, but only as brittle, corruptible Things, that are to sink speedily into *that* Dust from whence they were *originally* raised.

The *want* of *this right* Notion of our Bodies, has given Ground to *that excessive* Fondness of them which is *too visible* in the World. It would wonderfully abate our

Love, and Favour *for them*, if we were but *constantly* apprehensive of *their short Continuance*.

Death will *soon* overtake us, and *that* makes a *long* Separation betwixt the Soul and the Body; the Body that has had *so large* a Portion of our Study and Contrivances, that has been *our chief* and *only Delight*, *this* dearly beloved Thing must be laid in the *Earth*, to corrupt and putrefy, must withall its Gayety be made a Prey for the Worms to feed upon; and in the mean Time our Souls shall live naked and unincumbred with Flesh and Blood. For *Death*, tho' it destroys *our Bodies*, yet has *no Power* over the *Soul*, *that's* an immaterial immortal Being, and can *never* die.

When it is loosed from the Body, it still retains *its proper* Perfections, without *the least* Diminution or Eclipse; nay, 'tis probable according to the *more refined* Schemes of *Philosophy*, that the *Soul* is *much* hindered in her Operations, by the *Body*, and shall be *more vigorous* after Separation from it. Then the Soul will have *no* Prejudices or *wrong* Informations from *Sense*, no Allurements or Temptations from it, it will feel *none* of its Impressions, but will act by its *own* Counsels and Measures, without Disturbance or Interruption.

And the *Truth* of this most material
Point

for Easter-Even.

387

Discourse
XIII.

Point is fully proved, not only from the Experience we have of it in *others*, but by the *Example* of our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. For *this* seems to be the Sense of the latter Part of the Text. So it was shewed, that *we must shortly put off these Tabernacles*, by *dying himself*, and submitting his Body, after the Soul had left it, to be laid in a Grave, bereft of Motion and Vitality.

There was a *Difference* indeed betwixt his *Burial* and *that* of the *rest* of Mankind. Our Bodies are to remain under the Earth, till they are *consumed*, and made of the *same* Substance with it, but *his never saw Corruption*, and received no Damage from the Grave. This was what belong'd to *none* but *him*; but as for the resigning of the Body, whilst the Soul continued in its *full Perfection*, *this Part* is *universal*, and has *no Exception*.

It is the unalterable Law appointed, and long established by God, that we should go out of these Bodies, and should *not always* be united to them, as *we* are *now*, but live *pure Souls* for *some Time*, void of all manner of Sensations, and Influence from them.

In Obedience to *this Law*, *his own* most dearly beloved Son, being truly and properly *Man*, consisting as *Men* do, of Soul and *Body*, was graciously pleased, to shew

Discourse
XIII.

us the Way, by the Separation of *his human Soul*, from *his human Body*, for the space of *three Days*. And *his Resurrection* at the end of *three Days* was a *Type* of *ours*. For it should be observed, that *tho'* we are to part with *our Bodies*, yet we shall be clothed with them *once again*, and then *they* are *never* to be taken from us.

These are Things that call for a *more particular* Examination, and are capable of being applied to very wise and holy Purposes, which is what I proposed as the Subject of my Discourse at *this Time*, and what I apprehend to be very agreeable to *the present Solemnity*, viz. to shew the true Uses, and Improvements that should be made, of *this* Consideration, that we are shortly to put off our Bodies, and live *without* them. And because express Mention is had of our blessed Lord, as a grand Pattern and President of *this*, I may be allowed to refer to *his Example*, and *thence* we may be taught the *best* Rules, and receive the *surest* Directions.

First then, From this Notion of putting off our Bodies, it will appear, *that we do in Truth and Reality, consist of Body and Soul*, which is a Matter of *lasting* Consequence, and the Foundation of *all* Religion.

for Easter-Even.

389

Discourse
XIII.

If we consist of *Body only*, it would be clearly the wisest Course we could take, to indulge our selves *freely* in the *Pleasures* of the *Body* without *Restraint* or *Confinement*. For if we were *all Body*, the Pleasures and Interests of the Body would be our supreme Happiness and Felicity, and it would be hard, and injurious to confine us, within any Bounds in the Search of them. We might allow the utmost Scope, and Liberty to our bodily Appetites, and Passions; and in case we had *nothing but a Body*, there would be *no harm* in it. But since besides the *Body* we have a *Soul* to guide and govern the Motions of the Body, it must certainly be both our Wisdom, and our Interest, to take diligent Heed of *that* Soul, and not suffer the Body to ingross *all* our Care.

I will not *now* stay to make the *Comparison* between *Soul* and *Body*, *that* I shall have Occasion to do *hereafter*; at *present* I'm content to shew, that we have *really* *such* Things as *Souls*, and are *not* *meerly* a Lump of Matter. And from thence it follows, that we ought *not to slight* or disregard our Souls, as being a *Part* of our selves. They have a *just* Title to our Concern and Care, and it is most ridiculous and inexcusable to neglect them.

Practical Discourse

A Creature, that is made of *two distinct* Parts, cannot be compleatly happy, by providing for *one Part only*. His Industry must provide for *both*, or else he can *never* be happy. So MAN, because he consists of Soul, as well as Body, can *never* be happy, unless he gives them *both* their proper Pleasures, and makes Provision for the *Necessities* of *both*.

It is very preposterous in him to be *so intirely* devoted to the Service of *one*, that he should thereby greatly prejudice, and abuse the *other*. Yet as preposterous as *this* is, and as repugnant as it is to *all* the Rules of *Reason*, the *Practice* of *many* does far exceed it.

There are *some* who instead of providing for their Souls, have lost *all Apprehensions*, and *Sense* of them, and look upon themselves as *nothing* but *Flesh*; they have *no Notion* of a Soul or Spirit. Now *this* is Extravagance to the *last Degree*, for it plainly appears from the Separation of Soul and Body at our Deaths, that while we lived we *had* Soul as well as Body.

And *this* ought to be seriously consider'd, if we have Souls, there's all the Reason in the World why we should take *some* Care of them, as *much* Care at least as we do of our *Bodies*, since *they* are as intimate and essential to *us* as our *Bodies* can be.

for Easter-Even.

391

Discourse
-XIII.

be. Therefore are we very cautious of the *Life* of our Bodies ; And is there not at least the *same* Reason to be cautious of the *Destruction*, and *Death* of our Souls ? For *they*, tho' they do not die *so* as to *cease existing*, yet they *may exist for ever*, and be exquisitely miserable *all that Time*, which is *worse* than *any Death* we can think of.

It nearly concerns us then, to be careful that our Souls do not incur *this* Death ; If we are so timorous of the *Death* of our Bodies, so fearful to lose *them*, we ought undoubtedly to be timorous of *any Dangers* that may threaten the Soul ; we ought to be in Pain *always*, lest we should lose *that*.

Our Care of the Life of the Soul will oblige us also to take Care of *any Hurt* or *Mischief* that may befall it, as we see it does in our Bodies. We are afraid of their Dissolution, and *this* causes us to be watchful against *whatever* has a tendency to it. Sin, *wilful* and *unrepented* Sin, is the *only* Thing that will destroy our Souls, and for *that* Reason we should be continually on our Guard against it, and when we have been so unhappy as to commit it, we should repent *sincerely* of it, and *this* is the Method of *securing* our Souls from *Death*.

Practical Discourse

But we are likewise to remember, that as we study to preserve our Bodies from Pain, and all Uneasiness, so we ought to deal by the Soul, which is wracked and perplexed by boisterous and ungovern'd Passions, which bring as great Sorrow and Affliction, as any Tortures we could invent; and the Sedateness of the Mind, and Calmness of the Passion, bring as great Contentment, and Ease as can be desired.

And should it not then be our Endeavour to keep our Souls sedate, and quiet, free from the numerous Inconveniences, and perpetual Clamour of the Passions, when once they have shook off the Government of Reason? Anger, Envy, and Ambition are troublesome Companions, and as we value our Peace, and Comfort, we ought to avoid them.

Again, do we bestow much Time and Labour upon adorning and beautifying our Bodies, it is *abundantly more* for our Interest, that we spare a Portion of them to the Soul, in adorning and exalting *that* with Wisdom, and Holiness, in raising it up to Communion with God, by a frequent Meditation on him.

It is surely our Business, to take care of the Soul, since in doing *that*, we take care of *our selves*; for the Soul is *part of our selves*.

This

for Easter-Even.

393

Discourse
XIII.

This is made still of *greater* Force, if we consider, *that* we are to *leave* our *Bodies* *behind* us, and therefore *all* our *Pains* are thrown away upon *them*; but as for the *Soul*, *that* we are to carry with us, into the *next World*, is *always* to remain with us, and therefore, *that* especially deserves, and will abundantly requite our Pains.

Would we *thus* argue with our selves, we should *soon* be brought to see, how wretchedly we undervalue the Soul, industrious only how to caress, and indulge the Body.

Let us think a little, *we are not all Matter*, and *nothing more*. There's *something* *within* us, that *actuates* and gives *Life* to the *Body*, and what should *that* be but the *Soul*? And if we have a Soul, then certainly we ought to take *some* Care about it, and not suffer *our whole* Strength and Vigour to be employ'd on the *Body*, which besides, that it is but a *Part* of our Composition, is to last but a *small Space*, and *we* shall *speedily* be dismissed from it.

Secondly, This Observation that we are to put off our Bodies, *will instruct us in the Dignity and Superiority of the Soul above the Body*.

The *first* Point was, that we be *fully* perswaded of the *Existence* and *Reality* of *our Souls*, of which I need not fear to say,
we

we have as good Evidence as can be given, and our next Care must be to learn the true Worth and Dignity of the Soul, that so we may proportion our Esteem and Love accordingly.

Now we can have no better way of Instruction in this, than to remember that we are to bid an Adieu to the Body, the Soul is to live separate from it, and the Soul once gone, the Body is deprived of Sense and Motion; but the Soul her self suffers nothing by this Separation, but rather gains, and is made more glorious by it.

The Soul is the Seat of Knowledge and Sensation, and the Body is very insignificant without it. We see it is not fit for Conversation, or for the Sight of Men, after the Soul has left it (and indeed they are sharply to be reprov'd, who most indecently then expose it.) It rots and decays when the Soul departs from it; the Soul therefore is the chief and best part of us; whence we find in Scripture, it is used to signify the whole Man.

In that Account we have of the Number of those that Jacob had with him into Egypt, it is said, All the Souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, Gen. 46. 26. where by Souls are plainly meant not the Spirit in opposition to Body, but both together, making

for Easter-Even.

395

Discourse
XIII.

making up the *Persons of Men*. So in the Verse before, speaking of the Sons of *Bilhab*, which *Laban* gave unto *Rachel*, his Daughter, the Expression is, *All the Souls were seven*, that is, there were *seven Sons*.

And in *many other Passages*, *Soul* is put for *one's own self*; to denote the great Love a Man has for his Friend, he is said to be *as his own Soul*, Deut. 13. 6. as dear and intimate as *we are to our own selves*; which is the *highest Act* of Love that can be conceived; because the Love a Man bears to *himself*, is *naturally* the most affectionate, and strong. Whereas the Love *some Men shew* of their Soul as distinct from the Body, is but *very faint and languishing*. And if *we* were to love our Friends *no more than these Men do their Souls*, there would be *nothing extraordinary* in *such kind of Love*.

So that to love as thine own Soul, must import a *singular Affection* like to what *one* has for *his own Person*; In *this Sense*, *Jonathan loved David as his own Soul*, that is, as *himself*. And the Reason for *this way of Speaking* is, that the *Soul* being the *most excellent and noble Part* of *Man*, may well be placed for *the whole Man*, as in *other Cases* it is very usual.

The inspired Writings *never use Body* to signify the *Man*, and the Reason of that
is

Discourse
XIII.

is evident. The *Body* is only the *Shell*, and *Out-side of Man*, the *Soul's* the *chief distinguishing part* of him. Other Creatures have *Bodies* as well as *he*, but *he* only hath an *immaterial* and *rational* Soul; 'tis *this* that is the *peculiar* Glory and *Ornament* of human Nature, which would be but on a *Level* with *brute Beasts* without it, which would be incapable of thinking, of conversing, of acting wisely, without it.

By *Body* in Scripture we are always to understand (when the Word is to be taken literally) the *fleshly material* Part of *Man*, that is by *far* the *most dishonourable* and *ignoble* Part of him, and therefore it cannot consistently within the ordinary Rules of Speaking, be supposed to signify *the whole Man*. But the *Soul* being the *most sublime* and *heavenly* Part of *Man*, being indeed *the very Man*, may well be allowed to signify *the whole Man*.

There's one Passage in *St. Paul's* Epistle to the *Philippians*, Chap. 1. ver. 2. where *Body* may seem to be of the *same Extent* with *Soul* in other Places; He says, *Christ shall be magnified in his Body*, which may be interpreted *in his Person*; but even here I imagine, *Body* has *no new* Signification; and *Christ's* being magnified in his *Body*, was by the *Sufferings* and *Persecutions*

for Easter-Even.

397

Discourse
XIII.

secutions that beset him in it. Christ was magnified in his Body, whilst *that* was abused, and imprisoned, and at last quite destroyed for the sake of the Gospel.

That Exhortation of our Saviour's, *not to fear them who kill the Body only, and after that have no more that they can do, but rather to fear him* whose Power extends to the Soul, shews that the Soul is a thing of the *chiefest* Importance, and Concern to us, and so it is every where represented. And if the Soul be *so much superiour* to the Body, it ought to be taken Care of *before* the Body, and when their Interests interfere, it *ought* to be *preferr'd* to it.

We should not neglect providing for the Soul at any Hazard or Expence of the Body. For if our Souls be but secured, that's the *main* Point, and we need not be solicitous what becomes of *our Bodies*. But on the contrary, the Destruction of our Soul is a Damage *not* to be repaired by the *greatest* Advantages and Pleasures of the Body. It is no Profit to a Man tho' *he gain the whole World, if his Soul be lost* in the Purchase of it. As good a Bargain as foolish Men may think it *now*, they'll *one* Day wish heartily for an Exchange, when 'tis *too late* to obtain it. As to our Bodies, they were designed to be convenient Habitations to the Soul, and assistant
in

Discourse
XIII.

in its Operations, but the Soul was to maintain the Authority and Jurisdiction, *That* was to govern, and controul, and the *Body* was to be in strict Subjection and Obedience. *This* was the *first*, and *primitive* Condition of *Man*. And the *nigher* we come to it, the *greater* is our Happiness and Glory. But when we let loose the Reigns and Discipline of *Reason*, and suffer *our bodily* Passions and Appetites to carry all before them, *this* is inverting the Order of Nature, and bringing our selves into a State of vilest Slavery, as certainly **THAT** is the vilest and hardest Slavery, where *Servants* usurp Authority over *their own Masters*.

Nothing can be *more* apparent than the *natural* Superiority, and Dignity of the *Soul above* the *Body*. And were *this* well weighed, we might hope to see an happy Reformation in the Lives of Men. Trace all Vice and Wickedness home to their *first* Springs and Originals, and the *too fond* Opinion we have of *our Body*, and the *too slight* Regard we have of *the Soul*, will be found to give *Rise* to *them*.

Indeed the generality of the World are sunk so deep into *Flesh* and *Sense*, that they are *rarely* acted by *any higher* Principle. Wherefore it becomes us *often* to recollect, that the *Soul* is intended for *Government*,
and

and that the Station and Office of the Body is to execute the Orders it receives ; It was *not* made to *prejudice* the Soul, but to *assist* and *help* it.

The Superiority is in *the Soul*, which is of an *higher* Rank and Degree than the Body ; it has the Power of thinking, and acting in its own self, which the Body has not ; and in short, the Soul is *every way better*, and *more noble* than the Body. The Body we are to put off *soon*, but we shall *never* part with *our Souls*. The Body has *no Life without* the Soul, but the Soul has *Life*, tho' it be stripp'd of Body.

How then can we *justify* our Neglect of the Soul, and *our unmeasurable, our most unreasonable* Affection for the Body ? If the *Excellency* of Things be *any Rule* in the Prosecution of them, we ought *principally* to study the Welfare and Prosperity of our Souls, because *they* are *more valuable* than the Body. Let our Souls have the *chief* Place, and our Bodies be minded but in *Subordination* to them, and in exact and timorous Agreement *with* them.

It is a Disgrace and Shame, that we can bestow *so much* upon *our Bodies*, whilst we grudge every Little that is done for the sake of the Soul. *Tears* are *not thought enough* to gratify the *most extravagant Demands* of

of the *one*, whereas an *Hour* or *two* are esteemed a *great deal too much*, to take due Care of the *other*.

It is true in *this* Sense, what our Lord said to *Martha* in another, *Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful*, St. Luke 10. 41. The Care, and Salvation of our Souls is *the one thing needful*, the grand important Article of Life, but yet we neglect and employ our selves in a World of *other* Affairs, that are in comparison of *no Moment*. But if we would act in *this* respect according to the *Maxims* by which Men are wont to be guided in *most others*, giving the Preference to things of the *greatest* Excellency and Importance, we should make it our *first* and *earliest* Aim to procure the proper Happiness and Felicity of *the Soul*, and *not allow* the *Body* such an uncontrolled Ascendant over us. And if once *this* was done, *many* would be the Advantages following from it. For,

Thirdly and *Lastly*, Are we sensible of the Meanness and Subjection of the Body, and of the Worth and Superiority of the Soul; are we constantly apprehensive that we must leave our Bodies, *this should teach us not to value our selves upon any bodily Accomplishments and Qualifications*, nor to allow too large a Share of our Pains and Time
in

for Easter-Even.

401

Discourse
XIII.

in searching after them, but to purify both Soul and Body, and to prepare them for an happy Reception into the other World. It is absurd to boast, or grow proud of Things, which we are soon to part with, or be very eager, and industrious to obtain, what we are sure we cannot hold for a long Time.

Thus, for Instance, Riches and Honour, tho' they commonly exalt Men high in *their own* Conceits; yet they belong *only* to the *Body*, and supposing them never so advantageous, they are of use no longer than whilst we remain in the *Body*; when we put off these Tabernacles, they cease *wholly*, and will not accompany us into another World. And this is a good Reason to keep us from being *too desirous of them*, they terminate in the *Body*, and so must necessarily end with *it*.

We ought not in Prudence to lay more out on things than they are able to return again. But it is certain, whatever has relation purely to the *Body*, can never be a Recompence sufficient for the Toils and Fatigues we undergo in obtaining it. When we have done all, it can last but as long as the *Body* lasts, and that is not to last a great while, but we must shortly be devested of it. No Arts nor Contrivances can preserve the *Body* from Ruin, but the

D d

more

Discourse XIII. *more* Care we have of it, the *sooner* often it deserts us.

But as for what we lay out upon the Soul, that will make us ample amends for all, that is never to forsake us, and we are sure of succeeding in our Endeavours for its Welfare. Tho' even of the Perfections of the Soul, it is unwarrantable that we should boast our selves concerning them, they being *the Gift and Favour of God to us*. And therefore, it is much more impious and unwarrantable to glory in earthly Advantages, which besides that they are the Gift of God, are of a perishable decaying Nature.

The Ornaments of Sobriety, and Temperance, Humility and Meekness, Charity, Wisdom, and Holiness, will stand us in *greatest* stead, when our Bodies have left us. And *nothing* but *they* will do us Service; the Body is gone, and all the Pleasures and Interests of the Body are gone together with it.

From whence we ought to learn to despise the empty Honour, and vain Applause, and the unsatisfying Possessions of the World, and employ our selves *chiefly* in making a comfortable Provision for our Souls, after they are separated and departed from it.

At the utmost, worldly things can be of no longer Advantage than whilst we are in the World, but we are to stay in the World but a little time, in respect of the endless Duration that is to succeed it. By all means then, let us seek durable Treasure in the Heavens, and not content our selves with labouring for the Necessities and Concerns of the Body, which can be of no Use when we put off our Bodies, and consequently can be of no Use in the other World, where we are to live without them. We must needs be miserable there, since all our Endeavours and Purposes centring in the Flesh, they are all utterly unserviceable, when we are no longer clothed with it. Nay perhaps, there may be a farther Cause of Uneasiness to us *then*; our Souls may be *so sensualized*, that they may retain a violent Passion for sensual Delights and Pleasures, which cannot fail of giving us great Trouble, when we have no possibility to gratify these Desires.

This Consideration should make us mighty cautious of suffering the Body to gain too much upon our Affections. If we indulge it too much, we may contract vicious Inclinations, and Propensities, which will leave an indelible Mark, and Impression behind them.

Practical Discourse

Whenever then we perceive that we are growing *over-fond* of worldly things, it would be a prudent Course that we withdraw a while, and reason sedately about them.

Extravagant foolish Man that I am, to have *no higher Aims, no other Business* than what tends to the Ease and Welfare of the *Body*. If I can have *no Relish* but of *bodily Pleasures*, it is certain I can be happy no longer than whilst I have a *Body* to enjoy them. And how naked and destitute must I be then? When I quit the *Body*, I shall be at an inexpressible Loss, I shall be miserable beyond Imagination, for all my Purpose has been for the *Body*, which I find now, cannot in the least affect me.

So we should argue with our selves, when we are inclined to Presumption, and trusting in *our own Strength*, or to pride our selves in any external Accomplishments, as *Riches, Honour, Pleasure, Beauty*, or the like; Alas my Soul, these earthly Advantages, however pleasing and glorious they may look at present, yet they are calculated *only* for the *Body*, and the *Body* must be soon put off, and then *these bodily Pleasures* will *lose* their Name and Virtue, and I shall be quite insensible of them. Why therefore do I dote

on them, and love them so dearly? Is it not more reasonable that I place my Love upon durable and substantial Objects, that will always yield a Satisfaction, which nothing can deprive me of?

Such Reflections as these, would gradually lessen our Opinion of *sublunary* things, and increase our Value for *Heavenly* ones. But as Men commonly allow themselves great Liberty in the one, to the irreparable Neglect and Prejudice of the other, it is not to be wondred at, that the World has the entire Management and Possession of them. They never remember that they must put off their Bodies, but use them as delicately as if they were to keep them for ever.

'Tis true according to the Account we have of *this* Matter in Holy Writ, that the Body after the Resurrection will be a glorious, incorruptible Body, refined and purified! It shall be a *fit* Companion for the *Soul*, and shall *never more* be parted from it. And by this, Men may hope to excuse themselves, because the Body, tho' it be to be separated for a time, yet afterwards will remain to Eternity united to us. But this is in truth far from excusing our excessive Indulgence; for *only* the Bodies of *righteous* and *holy* Persons shall be raised *thus glorious*. They that have

employed their Bodies in the Service of *Satan* and their vile Lusts, shall have no share in *this* Resurrection of them.

Moreover, we are to observe that the Reason why these Bodies are to be changed and refined, is, that they are to be purged from all Corruption and Carnality, which stick but *too closely* to the *best* of *Saints*. Therefore, when Men are so fond of their Bodies, as to give up the Government to them, they take a very wrong Method of shewing their true Love and Affection for them.

That our Bodies after the Resurrection are to be purified from *earthly* Propensities; this is a plain Argument, that *those* *Propensities* and Inclinations are to make *no part* of our Happiness in the *next* World, for if they did, there can be no Cause that we should be cleansed from them.

To love our Bodies aright, is to provide for their Glory and Happiness hereafter, and they *not* being placed in *sensual* Delights, the Favours we bear to them in *that* respect, is a very unfitting and improper Instance of our Care for them. Tho' we shall have Bodies in the other World, they are *not* to be Bodies attended with such Inclinations and Desires as they have at present; therefore our indulging

ging of those Desires *is not* the way to make them happy. If they were to be just the same as they are now, something might be pleaded in their behalf, but they are of a different Form and Constitution, they are in Perfection, what the good Man strives all his Life long to make them, in faithful Subjection to the Spirit, never offering to rebel against it.

So that the *proper* way to demonstrate our *sincere good Will* to the Body, is to purify it, as far as we are able, from all Filthiness and Sensuality. But to drown our selves *in* them, to be wholly given up to them, *this* will be found in the Result, the *Bane* and *Destruction* of the Body; 'tis *this* that will rob it of that bright, and most desireable State, which God designs to bestow upon it at the Resurrection.

They love their Bodies *best*, who are *most* employ'd in refining them by Acts of Religion and Piety; this is making them Immortal and Happy; but to follow the disorderly Appetites of the Body, and to be guided by them, one would think, they hated their Bodies, who pursue this Course, inasmuch as they hereby infallibly frustrate the kind and gracious Intentions of Heaven towards them.

course
XIII.

And methinks, these are Considerations that might prevail with the *greatest Sensualist*, who pretends to have such a wonderful Affection for his Body; let him shew it, if he has *that Affection*, by preparing it for a glorious Resurrection, that so he may be *no Loser* by Death; that so he may put off his Body with Comfort, and the joyful Assurance of *shortly* receiving it *far better*, far more obedient and pliable than it was before.

Our Bodies are extremely frail, and precarious; and 'tis impossible to preserve them *long* from decaying; put them off we *must*, for a while, and at the Resurrection we shall receive them again.

But the Wicked, and Worldly-minded, will have a most uncomfortable meeting of it; they shall receive their Bodies indeed, but they have sunk them *so deep*, into the Concerns of the *World* and *Sense*, that they are *past Recovery*. Wherefore they shall receive them, *only* to be eternally distracted, and tormented with raging, and impetuous-Desires, which they *can never gratify*. This will be the *Effect* of *their* extravagant Affection for the Body, to make it *for ever* miserable.

Whereas the righteous and holy Person, who diligently curb'd the depraved Appetites of the *Flesh*, and sought after
the

for Easter-Even.

409

Discourse

XIII.

the Felicity of his Soul or Spirit, he shall receive a Body, that will give no Disturbance to him, an incorruptible Body, that has nothing of its present Weaknesses or Defects, but is exactly modell'd for the sublimest Pleasure, and lasting Ease of the Soul, with which it is to live for ever, in strictest Friendship, and blessed Harmony, all Variance and Enmity betwixt them being utterly abolish'd.

And if we love our Bodies, we ought to strive heartily, that *this* may be their Portion, *this their happy* Resurrection. In order to *this*, we are betimes, to sow the Seeds of Immortality, by suppressing, and discountenancing our bodily Appetites and Inclinations, since, as absurd as this may seem, 'tis the *only Method* to procure the eternal Happiness and Glory of the Body.

We are to live as our blessed Lord did above the *World*, and the *Flesh*, though we are surrounded and clothed with them. *His Meat and Drink* was to do his Father's Will, and it should be *our* constant Employment, and Study, to fulfil *his*. He always had a *farther* Regard than to *this present* World, the *Body* was the *lowest* and *last* of his Concerns, he did not sometimes allow *leisure* for the *Feeding* of it. And no doubt the Sense he had, that

Discourse that he must soon put off his Body, was
 XIII. the Occasion of his bestowing so little Care,
 or Cost upon it. A fit Example for us to
 imitate, who are apt to value our selves
 upon some trifling external Advantages,
 to the great detriment of the Soul. He,
 we know, courted no Applause, he was
 mean and humble in Appearance, and
 whatever belonged to the Body, he was
 not in the least solicitous, or curious
 about it.

But in *this* degenerate and most wicked
 Age, we go as contrary to *this* sublime Pat-
 tern as well we can. The *World* and the
Body, which he so much, so justly despised;
These are our chief Favourites, our Bosom
 Friends, and too constant Counsellors, we
 seek no other Felicity than what they af-
 ford us. Our Souls are seldom thought of,
 little Time or Care is employ'd about
 them.

But would we be perswaded to admit
 of *this* affecting Thought now and then,
 that as for *these* Bodies, these Taberna-
 cles of ours, we must speedily put them off,
 whether we will or not; *this*, I believe,
 will go a great Way in rectifying our Mis-
 takes. *This* will teach us, to have but
 a mean Opinion of the *Body*, however it
 will necessarily induce us not to be so en-
 gaged for the *Body* as to neglect providing
 for

for Easter-Even.

411

Discourse
XIII.

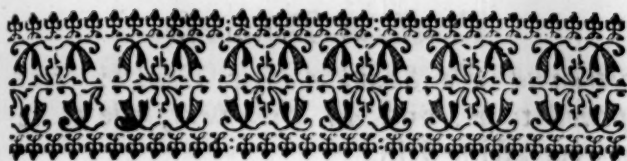
for our *immortal* Souls, it will learn us the Wisdom of *securing an Interest* in the *other better World*, before it be our Time to depart from *this*. By which Means the Apprehensions of our Departure will sit more easy and comfortable on our Minds; and in Time, we shall be brought to live, as those primitive Saints and Worthies, who have gone before us, who crucified the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts thereof; and who, whilst they tabernacled here, had their Minds and Thoughts continually disposed to heavenly Things.

Which blessed Disposition, may the infinite Goodness of that God (whom, I hope, we all desire to love and serve) mercifully grant us, in order to conduct us innocently and safely, through the Valley and Shadow of Death, into those *heavenly Habitations*, where the Souls of them that sleep in the Lord Jesus, enjoy perpetual Rest and Felicity; where we shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, nor sin any more, nor be tempted any more, neither shall the Sun light on us, nor any Heat; where there shall be no more Sickness, nor Death; neither Sorrow nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain, for the former Things are passed away. And these shall be no more Curse, but the Throne

Discourse
XIII.

Throne of God, and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his Servants shall incessantly serve him. Where they shall see his most beautiful Face, and *his glorious Name shall be on their Fore-heads*, and where we shall be always exulting, admiring, and adoring the Face of him, whom we dearly love, and evermore singing Praises, and Allelujahs, with Saints and Angels, Cherubim, and Seraphim, with Prophets, Patriarchs, Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins, and Confessors; and saying, with a loud Voice, (as they are represented to do by St. John, in his *Apocalypse*) *Salvation, Blessing and Glory, Riches and Strength, Wisdom, and Honour, and Power, Might, Dominion, and Thanksgiving be unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

PRACTI-

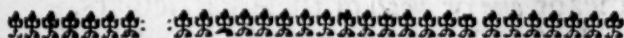


PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE

ON

Christ's Resurrection.

Fourteenth Discourse for Easter-Day.



ROMANS 6. 9.

*Knowing that Christ being raised from the
Dead, dieth no more ; Death hath no more
Dominion over him.*



THESE Words are part of Discourse
that triumphant Hymn, ^{XIV.}
wherewith our Church be-
gins the Solemnity of *this*
great and glorious Day.

A Day of Honour, and
Victory, dedicated to the Lord, and Cap-
tain of our Salvation ; who *this Day*
over-

overcame the Sharpness of Death; and opened to us, and all Believers, the Gate of everlasting Life.

How well doth Joy and Gladness become the *House of God*, and the *Dwellings of the Righteous*, who can say with the Apostle? Now, *we know, that Christ being raised from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him.*

Which Words are brought in by the Apostle, to confirm a Doctrine delivered in the foregoing Verse, and that was *this*, namely, *that if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.* Where by being *dead with Christ*, is meant *one or both* of these Particulars.

First, If that by Imitation, and in Similitude with Christ's dying, *we die to Sin, and to the Service of this evil World*: If in Analogy to Christ upon the Cross, we crucify the *Body of Sin*, call'd the *Old Man*; then are we said to be *dead with Christ*; and *this* the Apostle calls, *Rom. 6. 5. being planted in the likeness of his Death*, by killing vitious Desires; for to the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, the Apostle adapts several allegorical Kinds of Speech, and the mortified State he makes to symbolize with the *Death*; and the renewed Life, with the *Return and Resurrection of Christ.*

Secondly,

for Easter-Day..

415

Discourse

XIV.

Secondly, Or else by a sincere and constant Confession of God, and his Truth to Death, the laying down our Life in, and for the Maintenance of the Truth of the Gospel, this is to be dead with Christ.

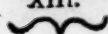
Or at leastwise, he that is of a ready and prepared Mind to *do*, and *suffer the whole Will of God*, and to part with all that's *desirable in this*, in order to enjoy his Saviour in a *better World*; *this is the Person, who, in some Sense, is said already, to be dead with Christ.*

And if after *this Manner we* can say we are dead with Christ, we may then take Courage and say with the Apostle, *we believe, or we are certain of it, that we shall also live with him*: That is, we shall be raised up at the *last Day*, to live *for ever*, a heavenly, and happy Life with Christ Jesus, *for if we be dead with Christ, we believe also that we shall live with him.*

Now, to make out the Truth of *this Doctrine*, and to *support the Christians* with well grounded Hopes of Life, and Immortality, at the Resurrection of the Just, he makes use of these two Arguments in my Text.

The *First*, taken from the Certainty of Christ's being raised from the Dead, of which he speaks positively,

We



Practical Discourse

We know that Christ being raised from the Dead.

Secondly, The other, from the Certainty of a compleat Victory which he obtain'd over Death, and the Grave once for all. He dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over Him.

Upon these two Points shall be my following Discourse; and I shall shew you, of what Efficacy the Belief of them is, to support our Hopes of being raised again; to live for ever with God.

First, The Certainty of Christ's being raised, about which St. Paul speaks with great Assurance, Knowing.

What the Apostles attested of *this* Matter, was *not* taken up by *them* upon *trust*, as brought to them by *Fame*, or *common Report*, but *they* were *thoroughly convinced* of it, and from *their own Knowledge* well understood it to be *certainly true*. And because the *Consequences* of *this* Doctrine were *so great and material*, they ought to have *all imaginable Security and Assurance* of it. For the *whole* of Christianity lay at stake, and turn'd upon *this one Point*, as to the *Truth or Falshood* of it.

Christians would appear the *greatest Fools*, or *wisest of Men*, the *most happy*, or *most miserable* upon Earth, for *if in this Life*

for Easter-Day.

417

Discourse
XIV.

Life only, we have Hope, we are of all Men most miserable, 1 Cor. 15. 19.

But as the Fact of Christ's being raised, was *open* and *publick*, void of Fraud and Artifice ; so were the *first* Abettors and Preachers of it, Men and Women, who had no *Designs* to set up *themselves*, by spreading *false News* ; or if they had, they would have chose, and pitch'd upon Methods *more probable*, Things *more suitable*, and *agreeable* to the *Interest* of the *present Powers* ; they would have studied *Lies* for the Good of the *Roman Empire*, as being the *most likely* Course to be rewarded for their Pains.

But it's a Thing incredible, that Men should concur, and agree together, in asserting, and maintaining *that* for true, the Truth whereof was *like to bring upon* the *Heads* of them, *all the Odium* of the *supream Magistrate*, the *Clamour* and *Spite* of the *common People*, and expose them to the *Scorn*, and *Derision* of the *greatest Part* of the World.

And besides, being *contrary to their Master's Religion*, and *Doctrine* ; it seldom falls out, that Men of Deceit, and wicked Counsels, agree long among themselves, but *something* or *other* happens to betray the Matter, and to bring Truth to light.

E e

But

Practical Discourse

But in the Case of Christ's being raised to Life, after *by wicked Hands he had been crucified and slain*; there's a perfect Harmony, and an indisputable Consistency in the Writings of all the Evangelists, and Apostles of Christ, for they *all* declare upon their *own* Knowledge, what they had seen and heard.

St. Paul, who was the *last* called to the Apostleship, one that had been a bitter Enemy of Christ, tells the *Corinthian* Church, when he was provoked to write upon *this* Subject, upon the Score of some new sprung up Doctrines among them, 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. *I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third Day.*

Which Doctrine, it's probable, he received from *Ananias* first, whom the Lord sent to confirm and instruct him in the Faith, *Acts* 9. And not only so, but we are to believe, that he received the Truth of the Doctrine by Revelation, or by *Vision*. And because a Doctrine of *such Moment*, and *not easily* to be believed, stood in need of *all possible Evidence*, he brings the Testimony of the *Apostles*; and first of *Simon Peter*, beloved of Christ,

for

for Easter-Day.

419

Discourse
XIV.

for he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, 1 Cor. 15. 5. returning to Jerusalem, St. Luke 24. 34, 36.

After that, he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater Part remain to this present, but some are fallen asleep, 1 Cor. 15. 16. Where he refers to St. Matthew's Relation, Chap. 28. 6, 7. where the Angel said to the Women, *He is not here, but is risen; come see the Place where the Lord lay, and go and tell his Disciples, that he is risen from the Dead; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, that is, Mount Tabor*, according to some ancient Tradition, where at that Time were met together abundance of his Disciples and Followers, *above five hundred Brethren at once*, of whom, he that desires further Evidence about this Matter, might be satisfied, for though some were dead, yet their Children and Familiars, were ready to testify what they heard and received from them.

And after all this, 1 Cor. 15. 7, 8. He concludes, *he was seen of James, and all the Apostles; and last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due Time; for to him our Saviour appeared, and spoke from Heaven, though it was so long after he appeared to the rest,*

E c 2

that

Discourse
XIV.

that he speaks of himself as *one born out of due Time*; not begotten or called in the common and ordinary Way that others were, but after a *more strange and violent Manner*.

However, by *all* this, it will appear, that St. Paul and the Disciples of our Lord, very well knew what they declared to the World, when they preached, *Christ risen from the Dead*.

Now the Knowledge and Assurance of this Thing did not a little contribute to the Ease and Quiet of the Christians *then*, and will do the *same* for *all* good Men, to the World's End.

'Tis true, we can't say we know, as Knowledge proceeds from *Personal Acquaintance and ocular Demonstration*: But the Knowledge is derived to us, by an *unquestionable Authority*. The Thing is conveyed and revealed to us from the sacred Writings of God's Spirit, and the Truth hath been *confirmed* in the Souls of good Men, by *the Operation of the Holy Ghost*.

So that *our* Assurance of the Work of *this* great Day is the Exercise of Faith. We are to believe, and rejoice in him, *whom we have not yet seen*.

St Thomas refused to believe the Report of his Fellow-Disciples, but our Lord repre-

reprehending his Incredulity, said, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*, St. John 20. 29. For a *divine Faith* in the Revelations of the Gospel, may have the *same Effect* upon the Minds of Christians in *this last*, as *visible Evidence*, and *sensible Demonstration* had in the *first Age* of the Church. And if we are perswaded of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, we may conclude *as reasonably* as *they*, before us, that we have *also Cause to hope*, and *expect to live with him*.

For in *all Times*, and *Ages*, *this Doctrine* revived the Christians Hope, *the Disciples were glad when they saw the Lord*, and told the Tidings one to another with Transports of Joy, that the Lord was risen. The Knowledge of this in some Measure at so great a Distance, recreated the Souls of the Patriarchs, and Prophets. Holy *Job*, in the midst of his Sorrows and Troubles, comforts himself after this Manner, *I know that my Redeemer lives*.

And if *any* Consideration will uphold the Christian in his Incounters with the Sufferings of *this Life*, and the Agonies of *Death*, it must be *that* of his Lord's *Return* and *Resurrection*. For if *he be our Head*, we have all Reason to believe,

that the *Members* shall be conformable to *him*. And if *he* arose in *our* Nature, what should make *us* despair of rising again to *live* with *him*? This is the first Argument to support their Hopes of living with Christ, *because we know that Christ is raised from the Dead*. I proceed to the

2d. To wit, *The Certainty of a complete Victory over Death, and the Power of the Grave by Christ's Resurrection*. Christ dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him.

When our Lord personated *Man*, and took *his* Nature upon *him*, he became subject to the Conditions of a *frail, mortal* Creature, such as Sorrow and Grief, Pain and Death, upon which Account, he is said to *have tasted Death for every Man*, Heb. 2. 9.

Now if *he* had been *still detained* under the *Dominion of Death*; our *Hopes* had been *dead and buried with him*. But *his* Return to Life, is an *Assurance* to *us*, of an *intire Victory*, and a *Pledge of Immortality*.

Death was the *great and mighty* Conqueror in the World; its Power is expressed by *Reigning and Governing*, Rom. 15. 14. *It reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, and to the End*
of

for Easter-Day.

423

Discourse
XIV.

of all Things, for the Apostle assures us, that 'tis *the last Enemy that shall be destroy'd* and subdued, 1 Cor. 15. 26. But our Lord has slain *this Goliath*, totally defeated his Forces, vanquished him in the open Field, given him, and all his Retinue, such a general Rout, that they will never be able to rally again, nor attempt him any more, for *he dieth no more*.

We read of some few, who were raised to Life, but then returned again to the Dead; such was the *Widow's Son of Nain*, Luke 7. 15. *The Ruler of the Synagogue's Daughter*, St. Luke 8. 55. And *Lazarus of Bethany*, St. John 11.

But our Lord having *once* abolished Death, was *never more* subject to its Dominion, he was out of the Territory of *that Tyrant*, out of the Regions of the Shadow of Death. Death hath no more Dominion over him. Thus in Variety of Expression, St. Paul amplifies the Conquest of our Lord, as if *not enough* to say, *he dieth no more*, unless he adds ———
Death hath no more Dominion over him, which Amplifications, as they are applicable to *no Resurrections already past* besides our Lord's, so they distinguish it from all others before it.

The *First* is, *He dieth no more*. Which is *not a vain*, and *empty* Expression, but

Discourse
XIV.

has even an *emphatical* Signification, and speaks our Redeemer's Resurrection to be the *most remarkable one Way*, that *ever any* was. For though *several* have been raised from the Dead, yet soon after *they died* again. But with our blessed Saviour, it was *not thus*. Though he died *as truly as any Mortal at any Time*; yet being raised to Life, *he lives for ever*, which *none yet did but he alone*.

Secondly, *Death hath no more Dominion* over him, which Expression is no way superfluous, or needless Tautology. For *Death* and the *Dominion* of Death are *different Things*. Death is an *actual Separation* of the Soul from the Body. The *Dominion* of Death, lies in our *Obnoxiousness* to that Separation, *while we live*, and in our *continuance* in the *State* of it, when we are *dead*. In *both* these Respects *Death* has *Dominion* over us.

For unless we live till the Day of Judgment, *our Souls must* be separated from *our Bodies*. And as *this Separation* may be made *various Ways*, as by *Sickness, Accident, Age*, or the like, so *till it be actually effected*, we are *all the while liable* to it, and so *subject* to the *Dominion* of *Death*, *as long as we live*.

And then when we are dead, we are *under it still*, as being kept in *Death's Possession*,

for Easter-Day.

425

Possession, and under its Power, while we are absent from the Body.

Discourse
XIV.

But from *this* Dominion of Death, in both Capacities or Relations, Christ our Lord, by his Resurrection, was *intirely*, and *eternally* freed. For though Death does reign over all in this World, and in *some Measure*, in the next, by holding their *Beings* in a *separate* Condition, till the *last Day*, yet our Lord, by his *absolute* Resurrection, is set out of the *Reach* of *this* black Prince, the Sceptre of this universal Monarch is broke, and *Mene Tekel* is writ upon the Doors of *Death*, *thy Kingdom is departed from thee*.

And if any should ask the *Reason* of *this absolute* Victory, the Apostle gives it in the Verse following the Text, For in *that he died, he died unto Sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God*. The Rigour of the Law being discharged, he could be no longer detained in Bonds. For then 'twas a false Imprisonment, after *all* that the Law required was *satisfied*.

Wherefore by the Power of God, he was raised to Life and eternal Glory. For in that he liveth he shall *ever* live in that human Nature, which overcame Death, and is now set down *above all Principalities and Powers, in heavenly Places; expecting till all his Enemies be made his Footstool*.

And

And O what Consideration *more effectual* to establish our Hopes of living for ever with him, than *this* of our Lord's complete Victory over Death, and Rescue out of the Power of the Grave? 'Tis a great deal of Content at present, to be assured of an Inheritance *in Reversion*, but it will be an unspeakable Fullness of Joy, when *we shall be put into the Possession* of a Kingdom, and shall with our Saviour, *live for ever*, to God.

All I shall advise, by way of Inference, from the Premises, is, since Christ our Lord was raised up from the Dead, since he has triumphed over Death and the Grave, and lives now for ever with God, let's

1st. Possess our Minds continually with this Truth, and the Certainty of these Things, that the History of Christ's Death and Resurrection may not be heard, or read as a common ordinary Business, that little or nothing concerns our Souls.

This is too common a Fault amongst Christian Professors, and the great Scandal of our holy Religion, that we are so little affected about the fundamental Parts of it. We say our Prayers; but with so little Devotion of Mind, as if we had no need of any Thing we ask of God or cared to be heard, or answered by him.

We

for Easter-Day.

427

Discourse
XIV.

We rehearse the Articles of our Faith, but for all the good Impression they make upon many of us, we might as well have been declaring against them, and confessing, that whatever we say with our Tongues, yet in reality we believe never an one of them.

We keep our anniversary Days and Feasts, to the Honour of Christ and his Apostles, but by the Looseness of our Behaviour, by Debauchery, and Excess, one would conclude, we had been sacrificing to Devils, and not to God.

Let's consider (if any of us are guilty in this Point) how ill a Requital we make our Lord for all the Acts of Grace and Favour, shewed unto us, how we contemn his Love in dying, and despise his divine Power in rising again.

To prevent and cure these Evils, nothing more proper, with the Grace of God, than to keep warm upon our Minds, the constant Sense and Belief of these great fundamental Truths; that we would study to know them, and to know them experimentally, as St. Paul speaks, Phil. 3. 10. *Tea doubtless I count all things Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.* And among some of these Excellencies, he mentions this, that I may know him, and the Power of his Resurrection;

Discourse *F*ion ; not only the *historical* Truth, but
 XIV. find the *Power* of *that Faith*, commanding and governing his Life.

How *durst* he *vainly* waste his Talents, and *riotously* spend his Master's Goods, eat and drink with the *drunken*, *beat* and *abuse* his *Fellow-Servants*, that really believes the Articles of his Religion, or knows but the Truth in my Text, of *Christ's being raised from the Dead*? Let's then hold fast the Profession of our Faith in *all* Points, and especially in *this* of the *Resurrection of the Dead*.

2dly, Since Christ is raised from the Dead, and now dieth no more, here is *Ground of extraordinary Consolation* to good Men, against *Death's whole Dominion*, and *all things that belong unto it*. They need not despond under their *bodily Pains* and *Infirmities*, nor be over terrified with *Death it self*, because *all these* will in a *little Time* be *cur'd* and *conquer'd*.

We must submit to the Condition of our *Nature*, and quietly resign to *that inevitable* Stroke, but we are not without Hope, in our Death, for as *that Tyrant* did not long domineer over our *Head*, so *neither* shall he *always* insult over his *poor Members*.

Death will reign and maintain his Empire as long as there is a sinful Creature upon Earth; for 'tis determined for all Men
 once

for Easter-Day..

429

Discourse

XIV.

once to die. *This* is a sad Report, but it would be *much* more grievous, if we were *always* to be under his Dominion and Power; but *this* is our Comfort, that Jesus hath conquer'd for *us* as well as *himself*.

And *we* shall find the *happy* Effects of his Conquest, at *that* Day, when he shall subdue all Things to himself; for the Time is coming, and is at the Door, when *we* shall be the Subjects of *that* same Power that raised up the Christ, and he that raised up the Lord, will also quicken our mortal Bodies. When it shall be said of *us*, what the Apostle in my Text saith of our Head, that being raised from the Dead *we* shall die no more, Death shall have no more Dominion over *us*.

Now we can rejoice in the Hope of *this* Day; but *then* we shall triumph like Conquerors our selves, and say, O Death, *where's thy Sting?* The worst that Death can do to Believers, is to cut them down, but *can't* extinguish their Hopes of rising up. He may kill them, but *can* never conquer them, for *their Hope is full of Immortality*. Comfort therefore your selves, and one another in all your Sadnesses and melancholy Meditations of Death, with *this* blessed and important Truth, that Christ being raised from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him.

Third-

Practical Discourse

Thirdly and Lastly, Let us celebrate the Memorial of this Victory of our Lord's over the Grave, with Songs of Triumph. For this is our Passover-Day, a Day to be observed in all Generations, with the highest Expresses of Praise and Honour to God.

This was the Day of our Delivery, for we were redeemed from Death, and the destroying Angel will pass us by. O what shall we render unto the Lord for all his Benefits towards us?——Let's offer all that we have, even our Bodies, and our Souls, which are his. Let's arise from the Dead, begin a new Life, be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.

This is our Duty, and the proper Work and Exercise of this Day. Wherefore let Piety and Devotion, Joy and Gladness, be in the Dwellings of the Righteous. And let our Souls now magnify the Lord, and our Spirits rejoyce in God our Saviour.

The primitive Christians used to observe this Time in a very pious and charitable Manner, with all Testimonials of their Thankfulness to God, and Love and christian Compassion to all Men. Indeed, their Habits, with the Form of their Countenances, were sad and mournful during the Time of Lent, the Quadragesimal Fast.

Then

for Easter-Day.

431

Discourse
XIV.

Then the *Penitents* were prostrate upon the Earth, sorrowing and bewailing their Sins as the *main Cause* of the Sufferings of Jesus Christ. But upon *Easter-Day* the *Fast* ended in a *Feast* of good Things, and the *Table of the Lord* was spread with the best Things of his House. The Flesh of his Son was Meat, and his Blood cordial Drink indeed. Then there was a *Communion of Saints*, they embraced one another in Love, and went together to the Altar of God with the *Voice of Praise and Melody* among such as keep *Holy-Day*.

Now their *Prayers* and *penitential Confessions* were turned into *Hymns* and *holy Canticles* to the Lord: And they were daily in the Temple, blessing and praising God. And let the Practice of the first Christians be our Rule; let us imitate their Zeal and Devotion, their Joy and Gratitude, for the Blessings of the Gospel. The same Benefits are derived to us, and we partake of the same Altar with them, and shall we fall short in our Oblations? Shall those Blessings that open'd theirs, shut our Mouths? O no, God forbid, let's resolve with the Psalmist, to praise God while we have a Being. And with whom shall we join in Praise, but the Saints and blessed Spirits? With whom shall we sing, but with the four and twenty Elders mentioned in the Revelations,

Practical Discourse

lations, who had Harps in their Hands; and golden Vials full of Odours? And what shall we sing but that new Song? Rev. 5. 9, 10. Thou art worthy to take the Book and open the Seals, for thou wast slain, and hast redeem'd us to God by thy Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation, and hast made us unto our God, Kings and Priests, and we shall reign upon the Earth.

With whom shall we joyn in Praises, but with the Angels, round about the Throne, the Beasts and the Elders, whose Number is ten Thousand times ten Thousand, and Thousands of Thousands? And what shall we sing but as they do? Verse the 12th, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing.

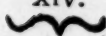
Now the God of Peace which brought again from the Dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

for Easter-Day.

The Prayer.

433

Discourse
XIV.



O most gracious God and heavenly Father, who hast given thine only Son to die for our Sins, and to rise again for our Justification. And this is the joyful Day of his Resurrection. For this, O Lord, our Souls do praise thee, and all that is within us shall bless thy holy Name, and we will never forget so great a Benefit.

O that thou wouldest but conform us to that Pattern which the holy Jesus herein hath set us, and cause us to imitate that illustrious Example he has set before us. That as he died and rose again for us, so we may die to Sin, and rise again unto Righteousness, mortifying our Members which are upon Earth, and crucifying the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts, and seeking those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God. That so when from thence he shall come to judge both Quick and the Dead, we may be of the Number of those that love his glorious Appearing, of those that shall rise in the Resurrection of the Just, and reign in the Blessedness of thine heavenly Kingdom, World without End. Amen.

F f

P R A-



I

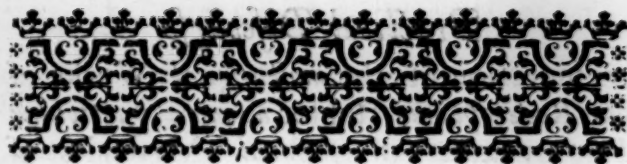
T

Fig

W



Far
par



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
ON

The End of Christ's Resurre-
ction, our Justification.

*Fifteenth Discourse for the first Sun-
day after EASTER.*

ROMANS 4. 25.

*Who was delivered for our Offences, and
was raised again for our Justification.*



UCH has been the indul-
gent Care, the great Wis-
dom, and Piety, of our ex-
cellent Church, in Behalf
of her Children, in order to
keep them stedfast in the
Faith of Christ, that she has set apart
particular Times for the more solemn Com-
memoration

Discourse
XV.

Practical Discourse

memoration of the *most signal* Works of our Redemption, and for a *more particular* Improvement of *several* Mysteries of Faith, at and upon such proper Times, especially, as to the Observation of the *Feast of Easter*.

Socrat.
Hist. lib. I.
cap. 10.

And to *this* she has been very probably induced by the *ancient* Usage of the *primitive* Church. For when *Constantine* demanded of *Acesius* a *Novatian* Bishop, whether he did assent to the Faith, and to that *Cannon* touching the Observation of *Easter*, concluded on in the *Council of Nice*; *Acesius* answer'd thus, *The Council, O Emperor, hath concluded and decreed no new Thing, for I have learned of old, that even from the Beginning, and in the Times of the Apostles themselves, the self-same Faith was retained, and the same Time for the Celebration of the Feast of Easter was observed.*

But neither the bare Commemoration of the *several* great, and *glorious* Parts of our Redemption, nor yet the *outward* Celebration of them in the Exercise of the respective religious Offices, which she hath instituted and ordained, *these*, I say, reach not the great and *pious* Designs of the Church, in those her wholsom and most charitable Institutions; but that which she chiefly aims at is, that each of these stupendous

for the first Sunday after Easter.

437

Discourse
XV.

pendous Acts of our blessed Saviour might have its *due* and *proper* Influence upon Men's *Hearts* and *Lives*, and render them *more like*, and *conformable* to *him*, who did *so great* Things for *them*, and who humbled himself *so far*, as to become *Man*, to be *born*, and to be *delivered* for our *Offences*, and to be *raised* again for our *Justification*.

In which Words, we may easily take Notice of a *two-fold* Estate, and Condition of our blessed Saviour. The *former* Clause gives us an Account of his *Humiliation*, expressed in the Word delivered, *he was delivered*. In the *latter*, the Apostle asserts the *first* Step of his *Exaltation*, when he says, *he was raised* again.

In each of which Clauses there is considerable,

First, An Act, he was deliver'd, and he was raised again.

Secondly, The Reason, or the particular End and Design of each Act; for our *Offences*, *that's* the *Former*; for our *Justification*, *that's* the *End* and *Design* of the *Latter*.

The Reason why I call these *Acts* which are here *passively* expressed, is, because our blessed Saviour himself was a *voluntary Agent*

Discourse

XV.

gent in both of them. I lay down my Life, saith he, *no Man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of my self: I have Power to lay it down, and I have Power to take it again, St. John 10. 17, 18.*

And as to *his Resurrection*, that which is here expressed in the *passive Voice*, is *else-where* in the Scripture rendred *actively*; and so indeed it is in every one of our *Creeds*, not, *he was raised again*, but he *rose again* from the Dead.

So that we may *safely*, and with *equal Truth*, read the Text thus——who *delivered*, or *offer'd up himself* a *piacular Victim* for our *Offences*, to obtain our *Release* and *Pardon*, to make *Expiation* for our *Sins*, and to deliver *us* from the *Punishments* due to *us* for *them*, and who *rose* or *raised himself* for our *Justification*, that is, to open the *Gates* of a *celestial Life* to *us*; to ensure us of a *like glorious Resurrection*, which could never have been had, if *Christ* had not been raised again to appear before *God* with the *Blood* of this *Victim*, to make *Atonement* for *us*, and thereby to procure our *Justification*, or *Absolution* from the *Guilt* of *Sin*.

The Text thus explained, the *Sum* of the *first Particular* amounts to *this* much, that *Christ Jesus* our *Lord*, by the *Appointment* and *Designation* of *God the Father*, and

for the first Sunday after Easter. 439

Discourse
XV.

and by his own free and voluntary Consent, did take upon him the human Nature, did suffer and actually die for the Sins of the World. For verily he took not on him the Nature of Angels, but he took on him the Seed of Abraham, being made like unto us in all Things (*Sin only excepted*) on whom God laid the Iniquities of us all.

He suffered not for any Sins of his own, for in him there was no Sin; not for the Sins of fallen Angels, for these he has reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness unto the Judgment of the great Day; but for the Sins of Men, for the Expiation of our Offences.

And this is sufficient to be said in general, concerning the first Part of the Text, that being more pertinent to Good-Friday, when we so lately commemorated the Passion and Death of the Son of God.

The Church is still celebrating his joyful Resurrection, and therefore it becomes me to hasten to the second Act here specified in the Text, and consider the main End and Design of that, which is here said to be our Justification.

Christ by rising again, has taught every true Member of his, what to plead at the Bar of God's Tribunal, against whatsoever Charge, Indictment, or Accusation,

Discourse
XV.

the Devil, his own Conscience, or any other Accuser shall put in against him. So that he may say triumphantly with St. Paul, in the 8th Chap. of this Epistle, 33, 34. Verses, *Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect; It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again.*

It would be needless to spend my Time in proving our Saviour's Resurrection, for that sufficiently appears from the Testimony of those who were Eye-witnesses of it, his most cruel, and inveterate Enemies, as well as his most beloved Friends, who saw him first cruelly put to Death, and afterwards beheld him alive again, and ate and drank, and conversed with him.

I cannot but readily suppose your confirmed Belief of, and your hearty Assent to that which you so constantly utter with your Lips, that our Saviour Christ, rose again the third Day from the Dead, according to the Scriptures. That is, upon the third Day after his Death, his Soul and Body which had been separated from one another, were by the mighty Power of God brought together again, and vitally united to one another. And so the same Jesus who was dead, became again alive, or as it is in our Creed, *rose again the third Day from the Dead.*

The

for the first Sunday after Easter. 441

The Creed does not say that *he was raised again* (as the Text does) but that *he rose*, which manner of Expression has led to this Question, *whether our Saviour Christ raised himself from the Dead?*

Discourse
XV.

In Answer to which, I have already hinted, that *he was raised by the mighty Power of God*, nor could *any less* than a *divine Power* have done it.

Yet, as Christ was God, as well as *Man*, so did he also in *that* Respect concur to *his own* Resurrection. And *this* is exactly agreeable to what our blessed Lord had predicted concerning it, when he said, *Destroy this Temple*, meaning his Body, *and in three Days I will raise it up*. Which is also, by the Way, a very fair Argument to prove his Divinity; and upon which Account he is called *the Resurrection and the Life*.

And tho' his Resurrection in *other* Scriptures is ascribed to God, and Christ is said to be raised up *by him*, and therefore supposed by *some* to do *nothing more* in the raising of himself, than *only to get up*, and come out of the *Grave*, when God had given him Life again: Yet *this*, as it falls infinitely short of our Saviour's Meaning, by what he said to give the *Jews a Sign whereby to convince them that he was the Messiah*; so it is intended

to

Discourse

XV.

to teach *us*, that the *Power* by which he rose, was *purely Divine*, and that *this Power* was in *himself*, and that therefore he was *not only* a *Man* subject to the *same* Infirmities as *we* are (in which regard, none but God could restore him to Life again, when he was dead) but that he was *co-equal* to the *Father*, being the Son of God, and so was *able* to do *all* that the Power of God *can* do, and to *raise himself*. And therefore, the Author of my Text in his *first* Chapter of *this Epistle*, and 4th Verse, observes, that *he was declared to be the Son of God, with Power, by the Resurrection from the Dead*.

Having explain'd what is meant by the Apostle's saying, that our Saviour was raised again; I come now to consider,

2dly. *The chief End and Design of his Resurrection*, which St. Paul tells us, is *an Assurance of his having compleated our Justification*. He was raised again for our Justification.

To be certain, there were *many* Designs and Ends *aim'd at* and *effectually accomplish'd* in *this glorious* Act of our Saviour; as the fulfilling of all the Types and Predictions concerning himself; the Manifestation of the Reality of his Death; and the Necessity of his Exaltation for it; the Demonstration of his Divinity; the Domi-

nion

for the first Sunday after Easter. 443

Discourse
XV.

nion acquired over Death and the Grave; the full Establishment of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the Honour of professing it vindicated; the Regeneration, or the Resurrection of our Souls from the Death of Sin, unto Newness of Life, and the Certainty of the Resurrection of our Bodies from the Dust at the last Day.

All these several Ends are pointed at, in holy Scripture, but the Apostle, in *this* Place, having *only* taken Notice of *Justification*, I shall *strictly* confine my self to *that*. *He was raised again for our Justification*, for the *Assurance* of the *Remission of our Sins*, and of *another Life to them that believe*.

We are *more properly* said to be justified by *his Resurrection*, because *he was then justified himself*, that is, declared *Righteous*, and free from Sin, which he had taken upon him. Hereby God declared, that *his Justice* was satisfied, and that *he accepted him* as a *Propitiation for the Sins of the World*, and thereby remitted of the *Rigour* of the Law, which had in *Adam* sentenc'd all Mankind to die eternally, delivering us from a State of Condemnation, and putting us into a Possibility of Living again, after Death for ever, upon our due Improvement of this great Mercy, according

Practical Discourse

ing to the Terms of the *new* Covenant of the Gospel, which are *Faith* and *Obedience*.

'Tis *this* that acquits us of our *former Sentence*, and offers us *new* Trial for our Salvation; so that *if* we die not for our *own continu'd Impenitency*, and *Personal Faults*, we are assured that *we shall never be hurt* by the Sentence of Condemnation, that doom'd *all* Mankind, in *Adam*, to *Death Eternal*.

Because Christ, who bore the Punishment of that Sentence for us, was discharged therefrom by his Resurrection, which assures us of the *Success* of his Undertaking for *us*, and that though Death yet has *Power* to *arrest* us as *Sinners*, yet it *cannot* hold us *for ever*, because our Pardon is procured, our Debt paid, and our Surety is discharged; *who then*, says the Apostle, *shall lay any Thing to the Charge* of God's *Elect*?

But there's a *certain Query*, which may offer it self to us for a *Resolution*; which is *this*——Had *we* been any farther from Justification, and from having our Sins taken away by Christ's Death, if Christ had *only died* for them, and *not risen again*?

I answer affirmatively, though Christ had died for *all*, yet *all* had died in their Sins, *if he had only died and had not risen again*.

for the first Sunday after Easter.

445

Discourse
XV.

again. *This Inference is expressly avouched by St. Paul himself, 1 Cor. 15. 17, 18. Where he thus argues, If Christ be not risen, your Faith is vain; ye are yet in your Sins, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

But does not St. Paul say, *Rom. 5. 9. We are justified by his Blood; How then, or in what Sense could those perish, who believe in Christ's Death, though he had not risen again? or if we be justified by his Blood, why is our Justification here spoken of, as an Effect or End of his Resurrection?* shall we say that *this Death did not merit all the Benefits which God had to bestow upon us?* No, God forbid.

Wherefore, for a clear and more particular Answer, I subjoin what follows. We are justified by our Saviour's Death, inasmuch as the Pardon of our Sins was hereby purchased, and the Hand-writing, or Obligation that was against us, cancelled. If Christ had *only died* for us, and *not risen again*, we might, by a steadfast Belief in his Death, have *escaped* the *second Death*, or the everlasting Pains of Hell; but *we should notwithstanding* (as the Apostle supposes in the fore-cited Chapter) *have been detain'd perpetual Prisoners in the Grave*, our *bodily or corporeal*

Discourse *real* Being should have been *utterly con-*
 XV. *sum'd* by the *first* Death, without *Hope*
 of *Restitution*, or *Recovery*, which *first*
 Death had remain'd *unconquer'd*.

But inasmuch as Christ is risen from the Dead, and raised to an *immortal* Life, over which *Bodily Death* has no Rule, or Dominion; all that *truly believe* such a Resurrection, are justified, not only from the eternal Guilt of Sin, not only freed from everlasting Death and Misery, but also intitled to a Life, over which *Death* shall have no Power.

The Sum of all is *this*, by Christ's *Death*, he having died for our Offences, we are freed from the *everlasting Curse*, we are delivered from the *Power of the Grave*: By his *Resurrection* we are made *free Denizens* of the *heavenly Jerusalem*, *Heirs by Promise*, of an *everlasting Inheritance*, *incorruptible*, *undefiled*, and that *fadeth not away*, reserved in *Heaven* for us.

This is the mighty Power of that Lord whom we believe on; By his *Death*, he has wrought *this Victory*, and by his *Resurrection*, he has purchased *eternal Life*, and *Righteousness* for us.

It had not been enough to have been delivered by his *Death*, from Sin, except by his *Resurrection* we had been endowed
 with

for the first Sunday after Easter.

447

Discourse
XV.

with Righteousness. And it should not avail us to have been delivered from Death, except he had risen again, to open for us the Gates of Heaven to enter into Life. And therefore St. Peter thanks God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his abundant Mercy, because he hath begotten us (saith he) unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from Death; to enjoy an Inheritance, Immortal, that shall never perish, which is laid up in Heaven for them, who are kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation.

And thus have I explain'd unto you both the *Act* and *End* of our Saviour's Resurrection, it remains only, that we consider briefly, what are *some* of the proper Influences and Effects, which this important Doctrine ought to have upon our Lives and Conversations. And the

First, I shall observe, is an universal Holiness and Newness of Life And here I take Holiness not in that narrow and restrained Sense, wherein it concerns the Body only, and is otherwise called Chastity; but more largely as it is a divine Quality, influencing a Christian in his whole Deportment, and consists in a regular Discharge of his whole Duty towards God, his Neighbour and himself; the contrary to which,

Practical Discourse

which, the Apostle elsewhere calls *μω-
λωμοὶ σαρκός*, *Filthiness of the Flesh*, and
Injustice, Pride, Faction, and Schism, which
he calls *Filthiness of the Spirit*.

Now *these*, and *the like*, are the *great-
est Mischiefs*, and Things of the *most fa-
tal* Consequence to Mankind, such as de-
prive us of the Favour of God, and ex-
pose us to insupportable Wrath and Ven-
geance. And the *great Errand* and *main*
Design of the Son of God in *all* that he
either *did*, or *suffer'd*, was to redeem us
from *all these*, and to *purify us unto him-
self a peculiar People, zealous of good*
Works.

This was the *End* of his *Incarnation*,
Passion, Death, and Resurrection, and it
ought to have answerable Effects upon us,
to reform the Lives, and purify the Na-
ture of Mankind, to implant in their
Hearts and Souls such a Temper and Dis-
position, as might powerfully incline them
to all virtuous, and worthy Actions.

2dly. Another Effect that the Resur-
rection of Christ ought to have upon us,
is *to work in us a real Indifferency to the*
Things of the World, and to warm our
Hearts with a vehement Desire after
Things spiritual and heavenly. Even *those*
glorious Things, which Christ purchased
for us by his Death, and rose again, and
is

is gone into Heaven to prepare for us ; the *Nature* and *Excellency* of which do infinitely far transcend the Worth of those Things that are seen, and temporal.

The *Old Testament* before our Saviour's appearing, ran most upon *temporal* and *earthly* Promises, upon Things of a *low* and *inferior* Nature. But now Christ is come, and hath suffer'd, and is risen, the Promises thro' him run in an *higher* Strain, and are made of Things *spiritual* and *above*.

It is not an *earthly Canaan*, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, which was promised to the *Jews*, that we are given to expect, but an *heavenly Country*, wherein dwelleth *Righteousness*, a full Harvest of Joy and Happiness, Bliss and Glory. Such Comforts, Joys, and Blessings, as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive ; and yet such they are as we should most earnestly desire to see with our Eyes, and to be made able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Heighth, and to know the Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge, that we may be filled with all the Fulness of God, Ephes. 3. 18, 19.

O with what generous Contempt, and Scorn, should we overlook all the Pomp

and Pageantry of this transitory World, and with the Apostle, value and account all but as Loss and Dung in Comparison of Christ Jesus, and him crucified, and risen again? Phil. 3. 8.

And *this* indeed is St. Paul's own Argument to the People at Colosse; *If ye be risen with Christ, seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right Hand of God. Set your Affections on Things above, and not on Things on the Earth, Col. 3. 1, 2.*

3^{dly}. Another Effect and Influence which Christ's Resurrection ought to have upon us, is *a constant Exercise of Patience and Contentment under all the Difficulties and Trials that we meet with in this Life.* For *such* we are to reckon upon and constantly to look for. He that *will come after me*, says Christ, must take up his Cross, that is, must both expect, and patiently bear the Tribulation of *this* World.

The *Christian's* Life is a Warfare, a continual Labour, and Exercise. And the Life of the Son of God himself while on Earth, was *such*: Therefore no Wonder, if the like Doom be passed upon all the Children of Men; for *the Disciple is not above his Master, nor the Servant above his Lord, St. Matt. 10. 24.*

for the first Sunday after Easter. 451

The *best* of us all has *no* Plea of Ex-
emption, and the *better* we are, so it hap-
pens, that *commonly* we are the *more* obnox-
ious to *Troubles* and *Afflictions*. Nor is *this* a
Thing of *new*, or *present* Observation only,
for it was Matter of *just* Complaint of *old*
in the Times of the *Prophets*; *Many* are
the *Afflictions*, and *great* are the *Troubles*
of the *Righteous*, says *David*, and the *Pro-*
phet *Esay* assures us, that *he that departeth*
from Evil maketh himself a Prey, Chap. 59.
Verse 15.

Nor was the Condition of good Men
much better in *this* Respect, after *Christia-*
nity got footing in the World. For *St.*
Paul expressly determines of *such*, that in
respect of the Things of *this* Life, *they*
are the *most* proper Objects of *Pity*, and
Compassion. If in *this* Life only, saith he,
we have Hope in Christ, we are of all
Men *most miserable*, 1 Cor. 15. 19.

And our Saviour gives his Disciples
plainly to understand, *what* they are to
expect. *St. Matt.* 10. 34. *Think not*, says
he, *that I am come to send Peace on Earth*.
As if he had said, Don't deceive your
selves with a *vain*, and *fond* Imagination,
that the *Design* of my coming into the
World was to *secure* you my Disciples in a
perpetual Enjoyment of *worldly Ease*, and
Quiet, but rather reckon before-hand, of

Discourse
XV.

Disturbances, and Troubles as your Portion, and yet more expressly St. John 16. 33. In the World ye shall have Tribulation. These are the Words of Christ, a Tittle of which cannot fall to the Ground.

But *now* in the midst of Troubles, the Resurrection of Christ is the great Support of a Christian. *This was the Ground of that heroical Challenge and Triumph of the Apostle, Rom. 8. 33, 34. Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us. And soon to the End of that Chapter, implying, that all which he had done and suffer'd in our Nature, would have stood us in no Stead, if he had not risen again, and ascended to Heaven to make Intercession, by the Virtue of what he hath so done, and suffered for us.*

When St. Paul charged Timothy to *endure Hardness, as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. 2. 3. He presses this upon him, upon the Score of Christ's Resurrection, ver. 8. which he then admonishes him (that he might be fortified against whatever should happen) to bear in Mind. Remember, says he, that Jesus Christ, of the Seed of David, was raised from the Dead.*

To

for the first Sunday after Easter. 453

Discourse
XV.

To this Purpose we should apply the Resurrection of our Lord as an *Antidote against Impatience and Discontent under Streights, and Difficulties, and Pressures of Affliction*; knowing this, that our crucified Saviour is risen again, and ascended into Heaven, where he is *not only touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities*, but invested with *all sufficient Power* to help us in all Difficulties here, and will at last raise our vile Bodies, that they may be made like to his glorious Body. Wherefore let us, according to our Apostle's Advice, in the 4th Chap. of his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, and 18th Verse, Comfort one another with these Words.

4thly. The Resurrection of Christ ought to fortify us with *Courage, Comfort and Constancy, against the Fear of Death*. 'Tis true that *Death* according to the famous Moralist is the most terrible of all Teribles, and Men naturally fear, and fly from it.

But Christ having by his Resurrection disarm'd, and overcome the Sharpness of it, hath thereby made it less formidable to Christians, so as that whatever Evil it may seem to threaten them with, yet it can do them none.

If it separates their Souls and Bodies for a while, it cannot keep them from joining together again. Nay, even by that

Practical Discourse

Separation, what doth it *more* but lodge an *infirm*, and *afflicted* Body in a *quiet Retreat* from all *Sense*, and *Apprehension* of *Pain*, *Grief*, and *Trouble*, and transmit the *Soul* to a *clearer* View of *those* ineffable *Felicities*, with which it shall upon its *Reunion* with the *Body*, be *completely*, and *eternally* happy?

And if *Death* *detains* the *Body* a while in the silent *Repository* of the *Grave*, it is but as in a *Bed*, and the *Soul* has *abundantly more* *Happiness* in *Heaven* without it, than it would *ever* have been capable of enjoying *here on Earth*, in *Conjunction* with it. So that tho' the *Separation* which *Death* makes, should be admitted to be *some* *Prejudice* to the *Flesh*, yet it makes an *ample* *Remuneration* to the *Soul*.

5thly. The *Resurrection* of *Christ* ought to influence us to a *firm* *Persuasion* of the *Truth* of the *Gospel*, and the *Doctrine* of it; to effect in us a *thorow* *Conviction* and *Belief* of the *Certainty*, and *Infallibility* of all the *Promises*, the *Reality* of all the *Threatnings*, and the *divine* *Authority* and *Veracity* of all that our *Saviour* taught and practised.

The *Resurrection* of *Christ* is the *greatest* *Seal* and *Assurance* that could possibly be given us for the *Confirmation* of all. *God's* having raised him from the *Dead* is a *sure* *Testimony* that he was the *Messiah*,
sent

for the first Sunday after Easter. 455

sent by him to deliver to Mankind his whole Will and Pleasure, and to reveal the Way of Salvation to them. Discourse XV.

So that *whatever* Men might conceive of him *before*, from the *Prejudices*, and *Circumstances* of his *Birth, Life, Sufferings*, and *Death*; how little soever *heretofore* his *Doctrine* might work on them to *Faith*, and *Obedience*, yet *now* he expects that his *Resurrection* should *fully convince*, and *persuade* them, for *hereby* he was declared to be the *Son of God with Power by HIS RESURRECTION from the Dead*, Rom. 1.

4.

And if *this* proves *ineffectual*, their *Conviction* and *Salvation* is *little less* than *desperate*, and *nothing* remains for the *Reward* of such obstinate *Unbelievers*, but *a certain fearful looking for of Judgment*, and *fiery Indignation*, to be poured out upon them, Heb. 10. 27.

To *this Purpose*, the *Apostle* discourses, *Acts* 13, from the 37 to the 41 Verse. Where, after he had *proved beyond all Contradiction*, that *Christ* was raised from the *Dead*; he *thence* inters the *Obligation* they were under, to *believe in him*, and to *obey him*, as they hoped to be pardoned and justified from their *Sins*. And then he informs them, that if after his *Resur-*

G g 4

rection,

Discourse

XV.

rection, *they retain their Obstinacy, and Unbelief, and reject his Doctrine, which had been so evidently demonstrated to be of God, that then nothing was to be expected, but the heaviest, and most remarkable Destruction; which accordingly befell the Jews.*

Of the *same* Import was *that* Reply, which our Saviour made in St. Mat. 12. 38, 39, &c. To the Scribes and Pharisees, who desired to see a Sign, that is, some Miracle wrought by Christ, who having wrought very many already to no purpose, as to their Conviction, did not absolutely refuse to gratify them, but after a smart, and just Reproof, he tells them that one, and but one only should be indulged to them, and that was his Resurrection from the Dead, after they should have crucified, and buried him, ver. 40. And they who would not upon that Evidence, be brought to Repentance and Faith in him, and to Obedience to his Gospel, their Condemnation should be greater and more inexcusable than that of the Ninevites.

6thly and Lastly, Another Effect is Perseverance in all the Christian Duties that are required of us. Universality in Holiness was the first, and a Continuance in the same, to our Lives End, shall be the last

for the first Sunday after Easter. 457

I observe from our Saviour's Resurrection, *Discourse XV.*
And *this* the Author of my Text, expressly infers from it in the fore-cited Chapter to the *Corinthians*, Verses 57, 58. *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Christ our Lord, by his Resurrection, has given us the Victory over the *Sting of Death*, and the *Power of the Grave*, which is *Sin*, and therefore, as well according to *St. Paul's* Advice, as according to our *baptismal Vows renewed Personally at our Confirmation*, and most solemnly ratify'd, and confirm'd at the holy Table, in the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, we ought all of us to be *stedfast, constant, and immoveable* in the Performance of all religious Duties, whether of *Piety and Devotion to God; Temperance and Sobriety, Chastity and Meekness* as to *our selves*; and *Justice, Charity, Brotherly-Kindness and Forgiveness* towards *one another*. So shall we be said to follow the Example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made *like unto him*; that as *he* died, and rose again for *us*, so should *we*, who
are

Discourse
XV.

are baptized, washed, and sanctified, die from Sin, and rise again unto Righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt Affections, and daily proceeding in all Vertue, and Godliness of Living.

The Prayer.

Grant, O merciful Lord, we beseech thee, that as we are baptized into the Death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by his Grace continually strengthening us, we may mortify and kill all Vices in us, and by the Innocency of our Lives, and Constancy of our Faith, even unto Death, may glorify thy holy Name ; that so when the Night of Death approaches, and overtakes us, we may have nothing to do, but joyfully to compose our selves to our final Rest, and to sleep in Jesus till the Resurrection. And when thou shalt raise us up at the last Day, let us find thee favourable and propitious to us. Then let us be Objects of thy Grace, and Heirs of thy Glory. Let us be numbred with thy Sheep, and set at thy right Hand. Let us be owned for thy Saints, and included in that most sweetly absolving, and most unspeakably gracious, and affecting Sentence, Come, ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you
from

for the first Sunday after Easter.

459

from the Foundation of the World. Grant this, we beseech thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Redeemer, to whom with the eternal Spirit, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory for ever, and ever. Amen.

Discourse

XV.

PRACTI-

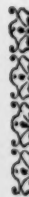


D

S

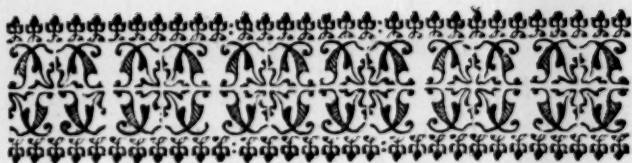
S

S



fe
a

u

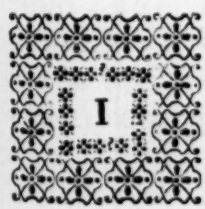


PRACTICAL
DISCOURSE
ON
Christ's Ascension.

Sixteenth Discourse for the Ascension-Day.

St. MARK 16. Former Part of the
19th Verse.

*So then after the Lord had spoken unto
them, he was received up into Hea-
ven.*

 T was God's Command to
the Jews, his own peculiar
People (after he had pre-
scribed the Object, and se-
veral Branches of his Wor-
ship) to separate, and con-
secrate not only Persons and Places, but
a certain Time every Week, Month, and
Year,

Discourse
XVI.

Practical Discourse

Tear, for the Performance of his *publick* Worship, that *they* might commemorate with *devout* and *thankful* Hearts, his *Creation*, *Preservation*, and *Effusion* of *all* his Blessings, both *Spiritual* and *Temporal*, upon them.

And when the *Jews*, of *their own* accord, did institute *the Feasts of Parim*, and *Dedication of the Temple*; God accepted them as a *free-will Offering*, and our blessed Saviour honoured the *Latter* with *his own* most gracious Presence, *Esth.* 9. 21, 27. *1 Maccab.* 4. 59. *St. John* 10. 22.

Surely then, all rational Men will acknowledge, that the *Morality* of *these* Commands, and holy Practices, does *still* oblige us *Christians*. And according as God did to the *Jews*, so Christ has given Authority to his Apostles, and the succeeding Church of God, to direct *all* its Members in an *Uniformity*, to worship God, at *set Times*, and in *proper Places*. And most evident it is, that the *primitive* Church assembled *constantly* on the *first Day of the Week*, which in holy Scripture [is also called the *Lord's Day*.

And as for the *Nativity*, *Passion*, *Resurrection*, *Ascension* of Christ, and the *Descent of the holy Ghost*, upon the *Apostles*, they were celebrated in the very *Beginnings*

for the Ascension-Day.

463

Discourse

XVI.

See Gregory's Observat. p. 57.

nings of Christianity, and recorded in the *Oriental*, as well as the *Grecian* and *Roman* Calendar. Being then they are of *such ancient*, and *general* Use in the Church of God, as their Fountain is not known, therefore they must of *Necessity* flow from the Practice of the *Apostles*, and be resolved into *their* Institution.

Moreover, the *Birth*, and *Martyrdom* of the *Apostles*, and *other Saints* in Scripture, were observed by the *primitive Fathers*, and they have left us *their* excellent Homilies upon *those* Days, and therefore must be at least, of *Ecclesiastical* Institution.

But then the Intent of *these* Holy-days, is not Rioting and Drunkenness, Idleness or Superstition, but merely to promote *true Piety* amongst Christians, that *we all* might have leisure for Devotion, and meditate on the fundamental Principles of our holy Religion, and receive *that* Doctrine, which was preach'd by the Apostles, and transcribe *their* most exact and exemplary Lives, in *our* Conversation.

Wherefore let every humble, and devout Christian, on the *Birth-day* of Christ our Saviour, join with the Choir of the heavenly Host, and sing *Glory be to God on high, on Earth Peace, good Will towards Men*. Let him, on the Day

Discourse
XVI

Day of Christ's *Death* and *Passion*, clothe his Soul with *Sorrow* and *Mourning*, for his own, and his *Brethren's* Sins, as the *Heavens* did themselves, with *Blackness* of *Darkness*. Let him on the great and joyful Feast of Christ's *Resurrection*, rejoice in the Lord, and rise with him, to *Newness* of *Life*. And we now here assembled, shall truly perform the proper Duties of the present Solemnity, if we lift up our Hearts, and Minds, and Thoughts and Affections to the Things above, and let our Souls soar up into Heaven, upon the Wings of Divine Contemplation, as our adorable Lord did in his triumphant Chariot, from *Mount Olivet*, into the highest Regions of Bliss and Glory ; according as it is described in these Words ; So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into Heaven.

In which Words there are five Things observable.

First, The Dignity of the Person that ascended, It was the Lord.

Secondly, The Time; After the Lord had spoken unto them.

Thirdly, The Action and Manner of his Ascent ; He was received up.

Fourthly,

for the Ascension-Day.

465

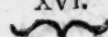
Fourthly, The Term of the Action, and the Place whither he did ascend, it was into Heaven. Discourse
XVI.

Fifthly, and *Lastly*, The happy Spectators of this glorious Solemnity, his Disciples. *They* were the Persons he spake to, and out of *their* Presence he was received up into Heaven. Of all these in their Order, and with convenient Brevity.

First, *The Dignity of the Person that ascended*, it was the L O R D. The holy Jesus, at his Incarnation, was anointed to be the Lord, for he was sanctified by the Power of the most High, and at his *Birth* was stiled by the Angel, CHRIST the L O R D, St. Luke 2. 11.

The *Shechinah*, or Divine Presence and Glory dwelt in our Saviour, for as St. *John* tells us in his 1st Chapter, and 14th Verse, *the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of Grace and Truth.*

The *Tabernacle* and *Temple* of *Solomon*, were *Types* of our Saviour's Body, and as the Divine Glory descended, and did reside betwixt the Cherubims, upon the *Mercy-Seat*, so in the Temple of our Saviour's Body, dwelt *all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily.* H h Da-



David was anointed *King* first *privately* by *Samuel*, afterwards *publickly* at *Hebron* over *Judah*, then over *all Israel*. So our *Lord*, at his *Baptism at Jordan*, was in a *visible* Manner anointed with the *holy Ghost*, and with *Power*, for the *Spirit of God* descended upon his *Head*, as a *Dove*, and lighted upon him. Then was *this* most divine Person crowned with an *Heavenly Diadem of Glory*, to be *King of Kings*, and *Lord of Lords*.

Holy *David* did noble *Exploits*; he slew the *Lion*, and the *Bear*, and the *uncircumcised Philistine*, endured *courageously*, and *patiently*, all *Afflictions*, and at last, was *victorious* over *all* his *temporal Enemies*, but *this* glorious *King* was *David's Lord*, and *Helper*, and proceeds to conquer all the *Kingdoms of Darkness*.

First, He begins to overcome *all* the *Temptations of the wicked one*; and destroys the *Empire of Sin*, by calling *Sinners* to *Repentance*, forgiving them, and releasing them from divers *Diseases*, that are the *sad* and *dismal Effects* of it. Besides *this*, he implants the *Grace of God* in their *Hearts*, and inables them to observe his most *holy Laws*. Then he assaults *Satan* himself, binds *that strong Man*, and spoils his *Goods*, and casts *whole Legions of Devils*, out of those they had possessed,

sefs'd, and sends them back with most horrible Lamentations, to the infernal Regions of Woe and Darknefs.

Discourse
XVI.

Afterwards, by raising *Jairus's Daughter*, the *Widow's Son*, yea, and *Lazarus*, after he had been *four Days dead*, before the Face of *all Jerusalem*, he demonstrates himself to have the *Keys of Life and Death*, and to be *the Resurrection and the Life*. Most deservedly then did *all* the People receive him into the City, as a mighty King, and Lord, and sing *Hosannah* to him, as the *Messias*, the *Son of David*, that blisful Person, that was to come in the Name of the Lord.

At this Time, *Satan* musters up *all* his malicious Instruments against this illustrious Conqueror, endeavouring to divest him of *regal Dignity*, to eclipse his *Glory*, and destroy his *Person*. To which intent, he is betray'd, apprehended, falsely accused, shamefully intreated, and finally condemn'd to a most painful, accursed, and ignominious Death.

Now this Conqueror, in the Eyes of the dim-sighted World, seems to be conquered, his Enemies upbraid him, saying, *He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be Christ, let him now come down from the Cross*. But maugre all these bitter Taunts and base Aspersions, our Lord be-

Discourse comes victorious, the *Cross* is the *Trophy*
 XVI. of his Victory over *Satan* the chief Con-
 ~~~~~ triver of his Death.

About *this* Time it was (according to the Narrative of *Plutarch*) that great *Pan* of the *Heathens* died, and was bewailed with bitter Howlings and Lamentations, for *then* it was a cruel Death, to have *all his Oracles silenced*, and *his Instruments confounded*; and *all the People*, tho' not converted, yet they *were sore perplexed*, and *flood amazed*. Even the *Centurion*, when he saw the Things that were done, he made *this free* Confession, that *truly this was the Son of God*. And *Pilate* himself thought *Christ* to be *some extraordinary Person*, nay, a *King* in that Sense he had explained it, and in his *Acts* and *Monuments*, left a *large Account* of the *Miracles of his Death*, and *Resurrection*. And, as *Eusebius* informs us, he sent it to *Tiberius Cesar*, who laid them up among the *Records of the Empire*, and accordingly they are appealed to by the *Ancient Fathers*.

*Thus* the Person that ascended when *alive*, and at his *Death*, and *Resurrection* had been acknowledged to be the *Lord*, is become *exceeding victorious*.

Having sufficiently spoken to the first Particular, namely, the *Dignity of the Person*, I proceed to the

2d. That is, *the Time after which our Lord ascended*, it was *after he had spoken unto them*. He rose from the dead, and conversed for the space of *forty Days* with his Disciples. Discourse XVI.

As our Lord gave unto the *Jews* the *Sign of the Prophet Jonas* in his Resurrection, so in *his remaining forty Days* upon the Earth, in *Expectation* of the *Success* of that Miracle. But the hard-hearted and unbelieving *Jews* found out this pitiful Excuse, *his Disciples came by Night and stole him away*. And tho' in *all this Time* they did not repent, yet his tender Mercy and Long-suffering bears with them *forty Years*, before he takes an *absolute*, and *general* Revenge upon his bloody Crucifiers.

Most expedient it was that he should abide *thus long upon the Earth*, in respect of his holy Apostles, for *by his Passion their Faith was obscured, their Hope weakned, and their Spirits dejected*, and very faintly did they expect, that it *should have been He that should have redeemed Israel*, St. Luke 24. 21.

Our Saviour appears to *Mary Magdalene* and other devout Women, they see a Vision of Angels, and told it to the Apostles, but *all seemed to them as idle Tales*, St. Mark 16. 9, 10, 11. *Peter and John* see the Sepulchre, by which they might be cer-

Discourse

XVI.

tified that Christ was risen. *St. John 20. 1. to the 19th.* At *Mary's* Return to the Sepulchre, Jesus appears to *her*, and after, to the *rest* of the *holy Women*, then to *Cephas*, then to the *two Disciples*, as they went to *Emmans*, who tell these Things to the *Eleven*, assembled the first Day of the Week at *Jerusalem*, *privately for Fear of the Jews*, but they believed them not. And *St. Thomas* had not the Patience to confer and reason with them of *these* Things, but was gone out from them, when Jesus appeared to them, and upbraided their Unbelief. *The first Day of the Week after*, Jesus shewed himself again to the Apostles, *St. Thomas* being with them, who was *then* convinced of his Unbelief, and acknowledg'd him, saying, *My Lord, and my God.*

At *these* Times, in order to resolve their Doubts, and dissipate their Fears, he manifests his Body *not* to be a Spirit, but *the very same* that he died in, for *they handled his Hands, and his Feet, they saw the Print of the Nails wherewith he was fastened to the Cross, and the Impression the Spear had made, when it wounded his sacred Side.* He demonstrates the *same human* Soul with *all* its Powers and Faculties; he *eats and drinks* with them, *talks, and sees, and hears, and reasons* with them, concerning

for the Ascension-Day.

471

cerning Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. And lastly, he manifests his human Nature to be joined to his divine, for he works Miracles amongst them, and breathed upon them, and they receive the holy Ghost. St. Matt. 28. 8. St. Luke 24. 34. 1 Cor. 15. 5. St. Luke 24. 33. St. John 20. 19. St. Mark 16. 13.

Discourse  
XVI.

The next Time he appeared to them, he caused them to catch a vast Multitude of Fish in the Sea of Tyberias, when they had been toiling all Night and caught nothing, St. John 21. 1, 3. Afterwards the Apostles go into Galilee, into the Mountain supposed to be Tabor, where Jesus had appointed them before his Passion, and after his Resurrection, St. Matt. 28. 16, 26, 32. And to this Manifestation they invite divers, that were Followers of Christ in his Lifetime; and it is commonly believed, that of St. Paul's Expression, 1 Cor. 15. 6. to belong unto this Solemnity, where He was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once. Here they all saw, and worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came, and spake unto his Disciples, saying, that all Power was given to him in Heaven and in Earth, therefore he gave them Commission to execute the Office of Apostles, St. Matt. 28. 7, 10. St. Mark 16. 7.

## Practical Discourse

And likewise he was seen of *James*, and then of *all* the Apostles, which were surely at his *last* Appearance *before his Ascension*, where he put them in Mind of *their former Unbelief*, and withal, of the great Dignity of Apostleship, that he had bestowed upon them, whose Commission doth extend unto *all* the World, but it was *not* a *temporal* Kingdom that he would invest them with, but a *spiritual*, as *his Father* had appointed unto *him*. And *they* (as he had foretold, St. Luke 22. 30. St. Matt. 19. 28.) *should eat and drink at his Table in his Kingdom, and sit on Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.*

And that they should be inaugurated to *this* Dignity of the Church, in a *most solemn* Manner, therefore *they were to wait for the Promise of the Father*, to be baptized with the *holy Ghost and with Fire*, which is the *Unction from the holy One, that should teach them all Things*, St. Luke 24. 49. St. Matt. 3. 11. 1 John 2. 20, 27.

*This* should qualify them with extraordinary Gifts and Graces, whereby they should be *enabled* to enterprize the *greatest* Performances, and be *Witnesses* to him *both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost Part of the Earth*, Acts 1. 8. And they should go and disciple others, baptize and instruct them.

And

And the Comforter should be with *them*, and with *those* whom they should ordain, even unto the End of the World, St. Matt. 28. 19, 20, Therefore our Saviour told them before, of a Necessity of his Departure, saying, St. John 16. 7. *It is expedient for you, that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* And afterwards he led them out as far as to Bethany, and on the Mount of Olives, he leaves his Peace with them, whose Branches are an Emblem of Peace. And there he uses an ancient Ceremony of the Church, which the holy Fathers of it practise to this Day. He lift up his Hands, and blessed them; and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven, St. Luke 24. 50, 51. St. John 20. 19, 21. And this leads me to the

3d. Particular to be insisted on, viz. The Action and Manner of our Lord's Ascent, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him. When this great Conqueror had overcome Sin, and Satan, Death, and Hell, and given his Apostles Commission to plant a Church upon Earth, and bid them expect the Promise of the Father, he actually triumphed according to the elegant Description of it by the holy Psalmist, *Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led Captivity*  
cap-



*captive, thou hast received Gifts for Men,*  
Psal. 68. 18.

*This Ascension was not his celestial, and glorious Condition after his Resurrection, nor by Virtue of his hypostatical Union, as he intimated to Nicodemus, No Man ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven, St. John 3. 13. But it was a true local Motion, or Translation of his Soul, and Body, as he was the Son of Man, from the Mount of Olives, through the Region of the Air, and the heavenly Orbs, till he came to the Throne of the glorious Majesty of God.*

*This is farther evident from the Manner, and Pomp of this glorious Ascent, as the Text says, He was received or taken up. Christ by his Divinity, and the Lightness and Agility of his glorious Body, could have ascended of his own Accord, but in Obedience to his heavenly Father he suffers himself to be carried up, which admonishes us humbly to expect, and tarry the Lord's Leisure, and patiently to wait all the Days of our appointed Time untill our final Change shall fully come.*

*Enoch's Translation was a Type of this Ascent, for Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God was with him, Gen. 5. 24. And Elijah after he had been very zealous*

*lous for the Lord of Hosts, and fulfilled his Prophecy upon Earth, by a Chariot and Horses of Fire, he was taken up into Heaven, 2 Kings 2. 11.* Discourse XVI.

But our Saviour's Ascension as far exceeds *these*, as the *Substance* does the *Shadow*, and as the *Meridian Light* does the *Dawning Day*. *These* had but *small Attendants*, our Saviour had *Heaven and Earth* attend him. Not only his Apostles and Disciples, but *the Chariots of God, twenty Thousand, even Thousands of Angels*, Psal. 68. 17.

A *Cloud* does not only signify an *Appearance of Angels*, but it also denotes a *Vehicle*, and *Presence of the Divine Majesty*, Psal. 104. 3. *Who maketh the Clouds his Chariots, and walketh upon the Wings of the Wind.*

It was not like that *Cloud in the Wilderness*, whose *fiery terrible Appearance* often *awed the rebellious Israelites* into Obedience, for they fear'd him because he was a *consuming Fire*. But it was a *Cloud of a bright, pure, and comfortable Aspect*, such as was called the *excellent Glory* on the Mount, when he was transfigured. And we read that when the *Temple* was dedicated, and the *Tabernacle* was brought into it, a *glorious Cloud* filled, and *overshadowed the Mercy-Seat*; so when *this glorified Body of Christ*

Discourse

XVI.

Christ our Lord was translated from *Earth to Heaven*, a shining Cloud received him. While they beheld he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight, Acts 1. 9. He was taken up *not* in a rapid Motion, as *Elijah* was in a Whirlwind, but by little and little. It so pleased his Disciples Eyes, comforted their Hearts, and ravished their Souls, that well might they join with the sweet Singer of *Israel*, and commemorate it with most affectionate Strains of Joy, according as he did, when he foresaw this glorious Ascent of Christ by his Prophetick Spirit, saying, *Psal.* 47. 5, 6. *God is gone up with a merry Noise, and the Lord with the Sound of the Trumpet: O sing Praises, sing Praises unto our God: O sing Praises, sing Praises unto our King.* But,

4thly. The Term of the Action, or the Place whither Christ our Saviour did ascend, It was into *Heaven*. Not into the Region of *Air*, or the celestial Orbs, which in Scripture Phrase are called *Heaven*; but into the *third Heaven*, into which St. Paul was caught up. For he that descended was the same also that ascended far above all *Heavens*, *Ephes.* 4. 10. Therefore above the *aerial Heaven*, for that is but his *Pavilion*, and *Vehicle*, where his divine Presence is represented to the Sons of Men, and above the *Starry Firmament*, for that Place

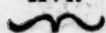
for the Ascension-Day.

477

Place is *not a fit Habitation for Christ's* Discourse  
*glorious Body, whose excellent Brightness* XVI.  
*doth as far surpass the Light of the Sun,*  
*as the Sun doth surmount the glimmering*  
*of the wandering Stars.*

He did *then ascend into the Heaven of*  
*Heavens, into the highest of the celestial*  
*Expansions, into the most excellent, holy,*  
*and glorious Part of the Temple of God,*  
*made without Hands, Heb. 12. 11, 12.*  
*Into the inaccessible Light, 1 Tim. 6. 16.*  
*Into the Throne of God, that most splen-*  
*did, beauteous Place, where his Deity re-*  
*mains, and sits at the right Hand of God,*  
*far above all the heavenly Hierarchy, all*  
*Angels, and Archangels, all Principality*  
*and Power, and Might, and Dominion,*  
*and every Thing that is named, Ephes. 1.*  
*20, 21. where is no need of the Sun, nei-*  
*ther of the Moon to shine in it, nor any of*  
*the Lamps of Heaven, for the Glory of*  
*God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is*  
*the Light thereof, Rev. 21. 23.*

The Tabernacle was an Emblem of the  
World, and the Holy of Holies did signify the  
third Heaven, the Court of Divine Ma-  
jesty, and the High-Priest was a Type of  
the Messias. And according to the Allusion  
of the Author to the Hebrews, Chap. 9. 1.  
As the High-Priest killed a Sacrifice,  
and with the Blood of it *once every Year,*  
passed

Discourse  
XVI.

passed through the Court of the Tabernacle, and entred into the Holy of Holies, to make an Atonement *for himself, and the Sins of the People*, Levit. 16. 2. Heb. 7. 27. & 9. 7. Even so the Messiah, when he offer'd up himself upon the Cross, *with his own Blood*, passed through the Court of this World, and entred within the Vail. *Into the holy Place, even into Heaven it self, to appear in the Presence of God*, Heb. 9. 12, 24. and to make a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World.

And O how might all the heavenly Hierarchy admire this Passage of our merciful High-Priest, when they beheld the Blood that he had shed, the Wounds he sustain'd, and all the bitter Sufferings he underwent, to consecrate him into his Melchisedechian Priesthood. Well might they salute him in the Words of the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 63. v. 1, 5. *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed Garments from Bozrah? This, that is glorious in his Apparel, travelling in the Greatness of Strength? It is I*, answers our Saviour, *that speak in Righteousness, mighty to save, with my own Arm I have wrought Salvation.*

Indeed it was his holy Life, and meritorious Death, that was the Cause of his  
victo-



for the Ascension-Day.

479

Discourse  
XVI

victorious *Ascension*, and *high Exaltation*. Because the Son of God took on him our *Humanity*, and humbled himself to *Death*, even the *Death* of the *Cross*; Therefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a *Name*, which is above every *Name*, that at the *Name* of *Jesus*, every *Knee* should bow; of *Things* in *Heaven*, and *Things* in *Earth*, and of *Things* under the *Earth*, and that every *Tongue* should confess, that *Jesus Christ* is *Lord*, to the *Glory* of God the *Father*, Phil. 2. 8, 9, 10, 11. And St. *John* tells us, Rev. 5. 11, 12, 13, 14. How all the holy *Angels*, and the *Spirits* of just *Men* made perfect, yea, all *Creatures* pay this *Tribute* unto *Christ*, saying, with a loud *Voice*, *Worthy* is the *Lamb* that was slain, to receive *Power*, and *Riches*, and *Wisdom*, and *Strength*, and *Honour*, and *Glory*, and *Blessing*; and others say, *Amen*.

The 5th and last Particular to be discussed, was the *Spectators* of this glorious *Solemnity*, his *Disciples*. They were the *Persons* he spake to, and out of their *Presence* he was received up into *Heaven*. Μετα τὸ λαλῆσαι αὐτοῖς, after he had spoken, instructed, comforted, and given them their *Commission*, he went into *Heaven*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 22. His *Humanity* was translated, and by his *divine Power*, he went up into *Heaven*.



Heaven. Yea, while he blessed them, he was parted from them; when he had spoken these Things, while they beheld he was taken up, St. Luke 24. 51. Acts 1. 9.

The *Apostles* were constant Attendants of our blessed Saviour, and chosen to be Eye-witnesses of all his noble Conquests, and glorious Achievements, he did on Earth, and therefore they must needs be solemn Spectators of his glorious Actions.

It was not necessary they should see the Act of his Resurrection, because he was manifest unto them by many infallible Proofs, after he was risen. But since all the Disciples could not see Christ in Heaven, therefore it was requisite that they should see him actually ascend thither. And because the Sight of their Eyes could not reach to the utmost Place our Lord did ascend, therefore two Angels that minister in the Presence of God, certify, that he was in Heaven, Acts 1. 10, 11.

St. Paul calls the Ascension of Christ, a Triumph. When he ascended up on high he led Captivity captive, Ephes. 4. 8. And Col. 2. 15. Having spoiled Principalities and Powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, that is, in himself.

for the Ascension-Day.

481

Our Saviour's Cross was a *Trophy* of his *Victory*, but the *Solemnization* of this *Triumph* is seen at his *Ascension*. And oh! with what amazing Joy might the holy Apostles look upon their glorious Conqueror, his pompous Chariot, and glittering Attendants? Happy were the Eyes that saw those Things which they saw, but as happy are we, if we do but believe those Things they have left us upon infallible Record. How poor are the Triumphs described to us, with the greatest Eloquence in Roman Story, in Comparison of this? How does the Glory of this one Solemnity eclipse all their triumphant Shew, and Bravery? Their greatest Victories and most fortunate Victors, their royal Spoils, triumphant Chariot, and Captives link'd to it, their Souldiers attending it, and the Reception by the Senate, and People of Rome, are not to be named with this heavenly Action. Our Lord does not overcome a sorry, few, poor, mortal, helpless Men, but the whole World, not temporal; but spiritual Enemies, Sin, Death, Hell, and the Devil.

Discourse  
XVI.

of a greater Conqueror

The Lord of Hosts does not wear a Crown of Cinnamon or Silver, Gold or Lead, or any other Metal, no nor yet an imbroider'd Garment, but has his Head incircled with Rays of divinest Splendour,

Discourse  
XVI.

and crowned with a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, and is invested with Robes of Light, more radiant than the Sun in his fullest Strength.

*His Chariot is not of earthly Matter, but a bright, heavenly Cloud, the only Vehicle assumed for Divine Majesty. The Captives are not miserable, poor, unfortunate Men, fitter Objects for Commiseration than a Triumph. But proud, and malicious Lucifer, the Prince of the Air, with all his obstinate Adherents, whom he despoils of all their Power on Earth, and drags them after his Chariot, near to the Gates of the celestial Palace, and then casts them down into the bottomless Pit of the eternal Tophet, there to be reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness unto the Judgment of the great Day, Jude 6.*

Our Lord's Attendants are not a few Heathen Souldiers, that are Slaves to Vice, and shortly to be overcome with Death, but Saints, and Angels, whose Portion is Light, and Life, Peace, and Joy, Rest, and Holiness, eternal Bliss, and immarcescible Glory.

O what an ineffable Reward did our heavenly Father give his well beloved Son after these signal Victories? Yea with what Joy, and Gladness, did the Holy Ghost descend upon the Apostles, to give Testimony

for the Ascension-Day.

483

Discourse

XVI.

mony of his great Power in Heaven, and welcome Reception there? Nay, how did all the heavenly Host, all the Souls of the Righteous, and Spirits of just Men made perfect, join together in the inspired Epinikion of the royal Psalmist, Psalm 24. 7, 8, 9, 10. Lift up your Gates all ye Princes or Angels (as Justin Martyr renders it) and be lift up ye everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory? It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in Battle. Lift up then your Gates, O ye Princes, and be ye lift up ye everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory? It is the Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory.

But tho', God be praised, we have the Happiness to meditate, and talk of these sublime and heavenly Things, that are the Mystery of our Salvation, yet we must not only gaze upon them, or let them seize upon our Imaginations, and float in our Fancies, but we must treasure them up in our Hearts, and make use of them as so many cogent Motives, and wise Directions in the Christian Life.

Wherefore there is need of that pious Admonition, that was given by the holy Angels to the Apostles, in order to curb and restrain their Curiosity, Acts 1. 10, 11.

## Practical Discourse

*Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up into Heaven, shall so come, in like Manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven. And as he affirmed of himself, St. Matt. 24. 30. When he shall come in his Majesty and Splendour to judge the World, He will come in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power, and great Glory.*

O let us then in the Name of God, and for the Lord Jesus Christ's Sake, as well as our own, recollect with our selves, what Account we shall be able to give of the Stedfastness of our Faith, the Sincerity of our Repentance, and the Integrity of our Actions at *that* Day.

Have we hitherto neglected the Performance of the Duties of Piety and Devotion towards God, and of Justice and Charity towards Men, of Sobriety, Humility and Temperance with relation to our selves? I beseech you, Brethren, let us be more exact, and circumspect for the future, and while we have Opportunity, let us prepare our Hearts with Grace, and habitual Holiness, as *the wise Virgins did their Lamps with Oil*, that so we may with the same Success, meet the Bridegroom of our Souls, when he calls for us. But indeed if we fail of *this provident timely* Care, we are undone for ever, and shall be left *without all Excuse*. For, First,



for the Ascension-Day.

485

Discourse  
XVI.

First, *This Article of our Faith*, our Lord's Ascension into Heaven (according as *all the rest are*) is *most certain and reasonable*, and will *convince any unprejudiced Mind*; therefore *no Christian* can plead *Ignorance*, and *want of Motives* to believe it. *We receive the Witness of Men* (otherwise we could not subsist in *this World*) *but lo the Witness of God is greater*,  
1 John 5. 9.

See, but what infallible Testimonies there are of Christ's Ascension. The holy Apostles are Eye-witnesses of it; the holy Angels affirm'd he was in Heaven, and that he would *remain there* till the Day of General Judgment. Moreover the holy Ghost, *that Spirit of Truth* (who according to our Lord's most solemn Promise, is to *abide with his Church for ever*) does witness the *same Thing* on the Day of *Pentecost*. It was he who *then* inspired the Apostles with extraordinary Gifts and Graces, whereby they were enabled to testify unto the World, by their exemplary Lives, and holy Doctrine, by sundry miraculous Acts, and constant Sufferings unto Death, the Truth of Christ's Ascension, and Exaltation, and *all other Parts* of the Gospel.

How *excellent* then is the *Ground* of our Faith, which depends upon *such* infallible



Testimonies? If it be examined by any reasonable Man (which is every one's Duty and Interest to do) it will captivate every Thought to a *due* Obedience.

And the Reason why it *does not spread* its Empire in the *Hearts of all* the Sons of Men, is because they are either ignorant of its Nature, or obstruct its Efficacy by their Pride and Prejudice, their Idleness and Indevotion, their inordinate Love of sensual Pleasure, or worldly Interests. And here let me add, that *as* the *Ascension* confirms our Faith, *so* doth it also *reward* and *augment* it; for it is the *Evidence of Things not seen*. The *farther* our Saviour is ascended *from* us, the *greater* is our Faith; and the *greater this one* Grace is, the *more glorious* will be our Reward. For *blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed*, St. John 20. 29.

2dly. This Privilege of our Faith enables every Christian *to overcome Sin, and improve in Grace and Virtue*. This indeed is a *natural Consequent* of it. If we acknowledge Christ, and own him to be our Priest, and Prophet, Lord, and King, our only Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor, that ascended to be also *the Captain of our Salvation*, then are we most deeply obliged *as faithful Souldiers manfully to fight under his Banner, against Sin, the World,*  
and

*for the Ascension-Day.*

487

Discourse  
XVI.

*and the Devil, and by following his Doctrine and Example unto our Lives End, we shall certainly overcome, and triumph over them as he did. ~~For~~ this is the Victory whereby we overcome all those Enemies, even our Faith, 1 John 5. 4.*

O let *this* generous Principle of Faith then possess our Souls, which will enable us to do all Things thro' *Christ that strengthens us*, to die unto Sin (whatever we suffer) and be crucified unto the World, and rise unto Holiness, and persevere therein, ascending from an *earthly* Condition to an *heavenly* State of Life, and going from *one* Degree of *Virtue and Piety* unto *another*, till they become *heroical*, and we be *comparatively perfect in Christ Jesus*.

Tho' our *Bodies* may continue a little longer in this painful, vexatious, and troublesome World, yet our Hearts and Souls may and ought to ascend, and dwell on *Things above*; methinks we can wish, and desire nothing *more earnestly*, nothing *more frequently*, than an intire Forgiveness of all the Errors of our Life past, a great Measure of Holiness to fit us for the *Intruition of*, and most intimate *Communion with God*; an easy, speedy, and safe Dissolution from the Prison of the Body, and then to *be with the Lord for ever*, who

I i 4                      has

Discourse  
XVI.

has been so long gone, *to prepare a Place for us*, and *never more to lose the Honour, and Happiness* of his propitious Presence.

Hence it appears that the stedfast Belief of our Lord's Ascension is most certain and reasonable, as it improves our Understandings, increases our Faith, makes us victorious over *all* our Enemies, and finally exalts our Souls with Grace and Piety, and makes *us strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*. But,

3dly and Lastly, The Ascension of our Saviour makes *our Hope lively, strong and certain*. For if we continue faithful unto our Lives End, we shall certainly triumph with our Lord, and receive a Crown of Life.

*The Sting of Death is Sin, but that being once mortified in us, we have then overcome the frightful Terror of Death, and the gloomy Darkness of the Grave, and may safely exult with St. Paul, O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin; and the Strength of Sin is the Law: But Thanks be to God, who hath given us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57.*

No sooner shall our Souls be separated from our Bodies, but they instantly pass from

*for the Ascension-Day.*

489

from a *State of Grace*, to a *State of Rest*, Discourse  
and *Peace, Joy, and Beatitude*, where they XVI.  
shall behold the Face of a Reconciled God  
and Saviour.

And *these Tabernacles* of our Bodies,  
that are *Temples* of the *Holy Ghost*, and  
Members of the *Mystical Body* of Christ,  
who is our *Head*, shall not be lost; but e-  
ven *they* shall at length be raised out of  
their Beds of Dust. For as that Holy Spi-  
rit raised up Christ from the Dead, even so  
it shall quicken our mortal Bodies, because it  
dwelleth in us, Rom. 8. 11. And as Christ  
our Head, who is the Forerunner, hath en-  
tered within the Vail for us, so we who are  
His Members have the strongest Hope to  
follow after; for as we read, Heb. 6. 19,  
20. Our Hope is as an Anchor of the Soul,  
both sure and stedfast, which entreth into  
that within the Vail, whither the Forerun-  
ner is for us entred.

And (as I partly intimated before) *this*  
beautiful stately Fabrick of the World is a  
Temple, whose Builder and Maker is God,  
and our Lord Jesus Christ is the High  
Priest of it, and the spangled Heaven  
which we behold above us so rich and glo-  
rious, is but a Vail that intercepts our  
Sight from the Holy of Holies.

But

## Practical Discourse

But at the general Resurrection, *this Vail shall be rent in Pieces, and as a Vesture shall be folded up*; Then shall we have an intimate Admission into the Holy of Holies, into the glorious Presence of the most High God, whose Seat is betwixt the Cherubims.

Our Bodies also being raised, reunited to our Souls, and glorified, we shall ascend, according as Christ has done before us; for Christ shall then, according to his Promise, *come again, and receive us to himself, that where he is, there his Servants may be also*, St. John 14. 3.

Then shall we hear those most joyful, and Heart-affecting Words, *Come ye blessed of my Father*, and then shall *that ancient Prediction of the Prophet Micah be fulfilled to the utmost Tittle*, Chap. 2. v. 13. *The Breaker is come up before them, they have broken up, and have passed through the Gate, and are come out by it, and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the Head of them.*

Where the Breaker, by the Confession of the Jews, is the Title of the Messiah; *the breaking up, and passing through the Gates*, is his breaking the Bonds of Death, and passing through the Gates of the Grave; after which, he should lead his

Fol-

for the Ascension-Day.

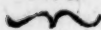
491

Followers to Heaven, *himself* going before in the Head of them.

Discourse  
XVI.

Seeing then, that our Lord's Ascension has been *so clearly* explain'd to us, the *Dignity* of the Person, the *Time when*, the *Manner how*, the *Place whither*, and the *Spectators* of the Solemnity, have been *so plainly* describ'd; since, as has been proved, we reap several Advantages by *his Ascension*, inasmuch as it *convinces our Understanding*, *increases our Faith*, *corroborates our Hope*, and *exalts our Affections*, may we all be admonish'd, in Consequence of what has been delivered, stedfastly to look up to Heaven, and with the Eyes of Faith, behold the Glory that shall be revealed. Let us resolutely set our Minds on Heaven, and frequently mount up thither with the Chariot of our Affections, and having *this Hope*, let us *purify our selves*, even as *Christ is pure*; looking down upon *this World*, with mean and despicable Thoughts, and beholding it, as it *really is*, a cloudy and disconsolate, a poor and sinful Place, a Place of Sorrow and Sickness, Pain and Uneasiness, Uncertainty and Disappointment, a State of Pilgrimage, and long Absence from our good and gracious Father's House, and therefore let us be very heartily willing to part with it. To





never used

## Practical Discourse

To *this* End, I earnestly beseech, and exhort you all to be more watchful over your Hearts and Lives, *see that ye walk more circumspectly*, and love God *more fervently*, and serve him *more faithfully*, than ever yet ye may have done, *working out your great and mighty Salvation*, with constant *Fear and Trembling*, and giving all *Diligence to make your Calling and Election more sure*, before you go hence, and be no more seen.

The *Time* of our *Life* is very short, and we shall die *speedily*. The *Hour* of our *Death* is very uncertain, and we may die suddenly; O let us then be *more constant* at our Devotions, *more frequent* at the Lord's Table, keeping our Thoughts and Hearts intent upon the Joys and Happiness of *that better and more abiding Place*, which God, of his infinite Mercy and Goodness, has prepared for us, desiring, as soon as he pleases, to have an easy and peaceful Translation to them.

Be, as often as you can, exercising Acts of *Faith* and *Love*, *Hope* and *Affiance* in our dear Redeemer, and be willing to throw your selves wholly, and chearfully upon him, trusting him with the Disposall of your whole selves, Souls, and Bodies, your Families, and all your Concernments,

ever-

## for the Ascension-Day.

493


evermore praising him for his Mercies, and earnestly praying for the Continuance of his Blessings; but more especially for the Light of his Countenance, and the Sense of his Love; a comfortable Assurance of Pardon, and Forgiveness, for all that is past, at the Hour of Death; and a joyful Absolution, at the Day of Judgment; through the Merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; *To whom with the Father, and the eternally blessed Spirit, be the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Discourse  
XVI.

## The Prayer.

**O** Most dear and adorable Jesu, thou ascendedst up on High, thou ledest Captivity captive, and gavest Gifts for Men. Lead us, O blessed Lord, we humbly beseech thee, out of Thralldom to Sin, and captivate our Souls into perfect Love and Obedience, Thanksgiving and fervent Devotion to thy self.

And do thou instantly indue us with such Gifts and Graces from above, as may enable us in Heart and Mind, in Soul and Affection, to ascend to that glorious Place where thou art, O dearest Lord, and where we wish and desire continually to be, even in the  
Light

Discourse <sup>XVI</sup>  Light of thy ravishing Countenance, and  
in the Joys of thy most taking and propitious  
Presence, World without End, Amen. Good  
Lord, Amen.

---

8 MR 55

The END of the First Volume.

---

